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# A NAUGHTY GIRL

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# A NAUGHTY GIRL.



## CHAPTER I.

### AN OVERTURE AND A LOVE SONG.

DRURY LANE Theatre is possibly the best place in the world to see a holiday audience, and never was it seen to more advantage than on Boxing Night, 1892.

The Spirit of Christmas and King Holiday seemed to have combined in order to do the highest honour to the occasion on the stage of Old Drury. People may speak disrespectfully of Father Christmas ; they may try to pull him from his pedestal ; they may tear his wreath from his brow, shake the snow from off his garment, and proclaim to the world what a senile, doddering old humbug he is ; they may say that holly is nothing but prickles, and that poison lurks in the berries of the mistletoe ; they may aver that mince-pies mean nothing but biliousness, and that plum-pudding is concentrated indigestion ; that Uncle John never arrives laden with presents, and that illustrated newspapers are liars ; that the turkey is the Pecksniff of poultry, and that brawn is an oleaginous abomination ; that Christmas hampers are a snare, and Christmas boxes a tax ; that Scrooge was a sensible saint,

and Tiny Tim a tiresome sinner—they may say all these offensive things and a great many more, but they will never venture to speak disrespectfully of Drury Lane Theatre on Boxing Night.

At any rate, they would not have dared to do so on the occasion already referred to, when the house was crammed from floor to ceiling to witness the first performance of Sir Augustus Harris's new pantomime, *Little Bo-peep*, *Little Red Riding-hood*, and *Hop o' My Thumb*. Every place was full; there was not standing room for a walking-stick in the gallery, and a thin sardine would have felt uncomfortable in the pit. Every one came early, and seemed determined to have full money's worth out of the entertainment. Every box was crammed, and there were such clusters of faces hanging over the gallery-rails that they looked like some novel form of decoration, especially devised for the festive season. Behind this might be seen heads upon heads, gradually diminishing, till they were lost sight of in the darkness, and half-recalled some weird pictures by Gustave Doré. Then what a bright scene was the dress circle—the crowd of laughing children in front, with a more sober background of papas, and mammas, and elder sisters.

Boxing Night is undoubtedly a children's night, and so thought Caversham as he lounged into the stalls and waved his hand to six merry little cousins, all of a row, leaning over the velvet cushions of the dress circle.

He just came in during the uproar and confusion that immediately precedes the overture. The "gods" shouted from one side of the house to the other, the stalls talked at the top of their voices, doors banged, people disputed with box-keepers, and seemed to be in a generally un-

comfortable state, till the conductor tapped thrice with his *bâton*, started the overture, and then the whole assembly seemed to settle down to thorough enjoyment. All the chubby little heads in the dress circle were nodding, and all the stentorian voices in the gallery were singing.

And what an overture that was to nod to and sing to ! Here comes "Auld Lang Syne," first pretending to be a hymn, then a march, and finally appearing in its own Scotch kilt. Then all kinds of old-fashioned tunes look in for a moment, as much as to say, "Here we are again !" And what larks the various musicians had with them. How they were chivied by the violoncello, tickled by the first violin, whistled for by the flute, brayed at by the trombone, growled at by the ophicleide, rung for by the triangle, crushed by the cymbals, and thumped by the drum ! How they play at hide and seek ! How they take flying leaps through the orchestra ! how they turn up in unexpected places ! how they pretend to be some other tune ! and how, finally, the cornet tears off their disguise in a solo, and in crisp and elaborate "double-tonguing" proclaims distinctly who they are !

Then a wonderful unanimity seems to suddenly pervade the band. All the instruments, from the first violin down to the triangle, assert "Then up came I with my little lot," and a similar asseveration is made in excellent time by the "gods" in the gallery. An old gentleman in the stalls, who ought to know better, noddles his head and conveys the same idea in an undertone, and then turns round and looks severely at the gallery, as if he were ashamed of them. Subsequently the orchestra seems to change its mind ; so do the gods ; so does the old gentleman who ought to know better. They make violent asseverations concerning "Knocking 'em in the Old Kent

Road ;" they have unmistakable notions with regard to "Tarara-boom-de-ay," and become rapturous in respect of the "Rowdy Dowdy Boys ;" they are wildly enthusiastic about "The Seventh Royal Fusileers," and wax frantic concerning "The Man who broke the Bank at Monte Carlo !" This seems to be quite too much for them. A lot of airs of every description of nationality then come trooping in from all points of the compass.

They change clothes, so to speak ; they have a "rally," they "take the slap," and have a "pelt and spill" all over the orchestra. Then the drum and cymbals interfere, and read the Riot Act ; the heavy wind instruments are sworn in as special constables, who take all the tunes into custody, and bind the cornet over to keep the peace. Then at last, when all the resources of the orchestra have been exhausted, and the conductor has apparently done all he knows, the whole affair is brought to a loyal and triumphant conclusion with "God Bless the Prince of Wales," "Rule Britannia," and "God Save the Queen."

Caversham was beginning to feel all the better. The full house, the merry company, and the excellent overture, had done him a power of good. By the time Mr. Dan Leno and Mr. Herbert Campbell had appeared he was getting into excellent spirits, and he was charmed with "Arcadia" and its dainty Dresden-china population. When the vastly pretty "Slumber Song" was being sung he happened to look up, and he saw a little grey-gloved hand on the cushion of the box above him beating time to the music. He leant back, and could just catch a glimpse of the occupants of the box. There were some children who appeared to be enjoying themselves prodigiously, and there was the proprietor of the little grey-

gloved hand, whose face he could not help fancying he had seen somewhere before.

Those eloquent eyes, that closely-coiffed chesnut hair, that laughing mouth, all seemed familiar to him. They seemed to bring back old recollections, and it worried him very much that he could not put a name to the owner of that pretty face. He kept on looking round, and once or twice he used his opera-glass covertly, but could not arrive at any satisfactory conclusion. One has, even at eight and twenty, some romance left, and the sight of this face caused Master Jack Caversham to become for a moment very thoughtful. And then he laughed, twirled up those light mustachios of his, and gave his attention to the entertainment before him.

He however, noticed from time to time that the young lady in the first tier box had nobody with her save the children, and that she looked round every now and then anxiously as if she were expecting some one to join them. Very few people ever dream of leaving their seats till the green curtain comes down on Boxing Night, and certainly no one would dream of such a proceeding till the Transformation Scene was shown. Caversham did not feel much inclined, despite the veteran Mr. Harry Payne, and the excellent company of pantomimists, to remain for the comic business ; so he just heard Miss Marie Loftus, as Bo-peep, sing to the most popular air of the moment—

“ As you go along, in joyful song  
Now mind you all declare,  
With most contented air,  
That you’ve had good Christmas fare  
Here at our jolly pantomime ;  
You have enjoyed a better time  
Than the man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo.”

He then watched the splendour of "The Language of Flowers" begin to develop; then he shut up his opera-glass, sprung his Gibus, and went in search of his overcoat. You may be sure he did not forget to glance up at the box on the first tier. In the glare of the red fire he could see the lady's face more distinctly than ever—he thought he never saw one more charming—and he noticed that the children were in high glee at the advent of the clown, and the party evidently had no intention whatever of leaving till the whole entertainment was finished.

In the lobby whom should he meet, in the lightest gloves, and in a bulging cuirass of white waistcoat and snowy shirt-front, and the most Brobdignagian of button-hole bouquets, but Kit Crickleum—Kit Crickleum, who is known as the "Pepys of the period," who may be seen at every show that is worth seeing, who is "accommodated with a seat on the Bench" at a sensation trial, and may be found at everything that partakes of the nature of a sight. It does not matter what it is. Anything, from a new comedy at the Garrick Theatre to the private view of a popular execution at Newgate.

"Well, Kit, what did you think of the show?"

"Very good. I can't stop for the harlequinade. I promised to run up to a children's party at Lady Larrinders. I dined very early to get here in time, and I'm prodigiously hungry. I'm going round to Rule's to have some oysters. Come along."

And they went along. They found the well-known "Bivalvium" full of people. The inner room was crowded, and as to getting a seat at the bar it was altogether out of the question. The attendants had the greatest difficulty in keeping pace with the requirements of hungry sight-seers. How the oyster-knives flashed, how the corks

popped, how the brown bread and butter disappeared, and the gleaming pewter pots were emptied! Still the crowd of people kept flowing in, as the theatres closed. Our friends edged in where they could, and took their oysters in pic-nicky fashion.

And what a mixture of conversation was going on! "Yes, you ought to go and see Miss Batiste in *Prince Patissier*"—"It will be the hit of the season"—"Thrown out of a hansom"—"More bread and butter"—"One of Toole's best stories"—"Yes; take his beard off, please"—"Full house at the Lyceum"—"All in the deep shell"—"Been shouting over *Charlie's Aunt* at the Royalty"—"Pint of shout, please; I mean a pint of stout"—"You made a pint of shouting, ha! ha!"—"Another glass of Chablis"—"How the little cad got into the club nobody knows"—"Cayenne, please"—"Capital account in the *Daily Graphic*"—"Three fat ones, please"—"Yes, of course, Leslie Ward did him in *Vanity Fair*"—"Possibly Chevalier's best"—"Burnand in *Punch*, of course"—"Pint of bitter"—"Been again to the Empire to see *Round the Town*"—"You heard the tale about"—"Just half a dozen more"—"The Court crammed"—"That'll do for me"—"Seven and six——"

"Quarter to twelve?" said Kit Crickleum. "I really must be off. It's a great bore. But I promised, don't you know, to look in about supper time. Where are you going?"

"Well, I shall just look in at the Oleander to see if there's any one there and have a smoke. May see you later, perhaps. Good night, Kit."

Caversham started in the direction of the Oleander and got nearly there; then he changed his mind and thought he would have a stroll first. He lit a big cigar,

he wheeled round, went through Covent Garden, and eventually found himself in Long Acre. The streets, though they were getting somewhat sparsely peopled, had quite enough vehicular traffic and uproarious holiday folk about to keep them cheerful, and so Caversham strolled on. As he turned down Endell Street he saw a crowd, heard a deal of strong language and wrangling, and evidently symptoms of what he would denominate a "good fruity row." If there was a row or a fight within half a mile he liked to be in it, so he approached and endeavoured to find out what was the matter. There was an old-fashioned carriage, with a pair of plump, well-to-do horses, that had, apparently for no sufficient reason, come to a stand-still. The crowd, which for the most part were in that state that it behoves a British crowd to be on Boxing Night, seemed to be chaffing the coachman.

"Wake up, coachee!" "Way-ho, Old Blazes!" "Touch 'em up, guvnor." "You're blockin' up the way, old cockalorum." "Drink yer health, old man." "Who're you're goin' to meet, Bill? 'Ave yer bought the street, Bill?" And then the crowd began to sing in maudlin fashion Mr. Chevalier's popular ditty.

The coachman, whom Caversham could see by this time had been celebrating Boxing Night, not wisely but too well, whose hatband was all awry, whose coat was be-muddled, and who looked altogether out of harmony with the equipage he was in charge of, glared at the crowd, then smiled idiotically and said—

"Shan't-go-on-unless-I please. 'Tain't-my-carrijanorses, an'-I-dolecare. Came-out-to-joy-meself; shall joy-meself. Won't drive-on-noliday time unless I like. I'll shtrike, I will. So let all shyranical livery-shables tremmle. I'm

fly-driversh friend, *I* am. I'm-free-an'-imipenant-britten. I feel prerry-comforable, an'-I-shall-go-to-bed. So-you-may-all-goterblazes."

With that he leered at the crowd again, and nearly fell off his box. He dropped his whip, and he had the reins hanging almost under the horses' tails. Had they not been the quietest and most good-natured brutes they would have bolted long ago. There was no policeman anywhere about, and there did not seem to be a prospect of one appearing. The windows of the carriage were so steamed that Caversham could not tell for certain if it had any occupants. The glass, however, was presently lowered, and he saw, to his astonishment, the same face that had so struck him earlier in the evening at Drury Lane Theatre.

The same face, looking a trifle paler and a little frightened. He noticed how the girl looked out hopelessly upon the drunken rabble; but when she saw him her face brightened. He advanced at once, pushing his way through the growling crowd, and, raising his hat, asked if he could be of any service. She said that her aunt's coachman had been taken ill at the last moment when they were going to the theatre, and that they had been obliged to get a fly-driver to take his place; that she feared he was tipsy; and that her cousin was to have met them at the theatre and seen them home, and altogether it was so very awkward, that really . . . Caversham said he should be most happy to have the tipsy coachman removed and drive the carriage home himself. She thanked him very much. "If you wouldn't mind driving as far as Great Ormond Street, I should be so much obliged." The window was once more put up. "Great Ormond Street," said Caversham to himself; "what an

odd place to live in!" However, he went to the coachman and said—

"Now, my good man, just please to come down!"

"Not yer gooman. An' don't just please ter come down."

"Bravo! Ooray. Go it, coachee!" shouted the crowd.

"Oo's he? Wot's he got to do with it?"

"Yes; worra you got to do wi' it, me fine fler?" asked the tipsy driver.

"Why, just this," said Jack, springing on the wheel and seizing the little man by the collar and rolling him off his box with a flop on the pavement.

"Shame! Yah! Shame!" yelled the crowd. "Knock-in' a pore, 'onest man about. Wot's 'e done to yer? Yah! Grrrr!"

A policeman, by this time, came up. The driver was given in charge by Caversham for being drunk, and several of the crowd were anxious to give him in charge for assault. They showed a disposition to hustle the horses and lay hold of their heads.

"Now, stand clear, all of you!" shouted Caversham, when he had the reins well in hand. But they would not stand clear; there was one man kept hold of the horses' heads, and the rest of the people crowded round. What with the yelling and the hustling, the horses, though naturally quiet, were becoming somewhat restive, and Caversham was beginning to lose his temper. He lashed freely to the right and the left, but still the man kept a tight hold of the horses' heads. Jack bent forward, and with the butt-end of the whip dealt the fellow a tremendous blow across the shoulders, so that he gave a yell and let go. At the same time Caversham hit up his horses, and at the risk of knocking down

half a dozen people he galloped off amid the groans, howling, and execrations of the mob. The two sober old horses went spanking along as they had scarcely ever done before, and their driver found himself in Bedford Square before he had time to pull them up into a steady pace. Great Ormond Street is not so easy to find, unless you are quite clear in your geography, and Caversham's knowledge of these parts was decidedly limited. It took him some time to get on the right track, for it may be recollected that Great Ormond Street is, as far as vehicular traffic is concerned, a *cul-de-sac*, and only approachable from the eastern end.

At last he found it, and was slowly driving up the grim old street, not knowing where to stop, and wondering at the strange adventure of the evening. There was tapping at the window and a waving of hands, and he pulled up. A door was immediately flung open, letting a flood of light across the pavement, and a grey-headed old butler came out. Jack got down from his box, and the rescued maiden thanked him very much for all he had done, and asked him to come in and see her aunt. He said he should be most happy, but asked where he should take the carriage to first. "Oh, it is very kind indeed," replied the owner of the blue-grey eyes as they stood on the threshold of the ancient mansion. "I am quite ashamed to trouble you any more ; but if you wouldn't mind taking it round to South Keppel Mews, I should be *so* much obliged. And you'll come back here afterwards, won't you?"

Caversham promised he would. But he found South Keppel Mews a great deal more difficult to discover than even Great Ormond Street. He lost his way several times, and when at last he arrived at his destination he

had to wait for ostlers and stable-boys, and by the time he had seen everything in the proper hands he found, on looking at his watch, that it was past one o'clock. He was by no means clear of his way back to Great Ormond Street. He did not know the number of the house nor the name of its proprietor ; it would probably be getting on for two o'clock by the time he reached the house, thus calling was most assuredly out of the question. So, acting like a wise man, Mr. John Caversham went home and went to bed.

## CHAPTER II.

## AT LADY ANKERWYKE'S.

"LET me see, aunt. To-day is Tuesday. Really we've been about so much lately that I've lost all count of time. No; to-day's Thursday. It seems an age since my adventure, when that *preux chevalier* rescued me from the savage barbarians of St. Giles's. And I have seen nothing of my Bayard with a blonde mustache. I wonder where he can be. Perhaps the driver challenged him to mortal combat. Don't you think it's odd he has never called, aunt?" said Beryl, looking up from the *World*.

"My dear," answered Lady Ankerwyke, "I dare say he has forgotten all about it. Perhaps he has gone out of town. Besides, I really don't see any necessity for his calling. It was very polite of him to rescue you and see you home. But, my dear, we don't know who he is and what he is. I think he shows his good sense in keeping away altogether. I'm sure I should have been terribly frightened had I known of it that night, when I was in bed with that fearful cold. If I had been up I should never have allowed you to start without an escort. It was very unfortunate Charles missing his train."

"Well, aunt, I didn't like to disappoint the children, and I'm sure the man was sober when we started, and I declare I rather liked the fun of the whole thing. It isn't every day one has such a good-looking coachman——"

"My dear Beryl, my dear Beryl," replied her aunt, as she shook her head, and then asked, "Has Charles called this morning? Where are the children?"

"Yes, aunt; he called quite early. So kind of him. He has taken the children out. They are going to have a look at the shops in Regent Street; then they're to have luncheon at Prévitali's; then they're going to German Reed's to see "All at Sea" and hear Corney Grain's new song. They've gone off in high glee, I can tell you. They talked about going to Walker's to have their portraits taken; but I don't fancy they'll have time. By the way, I don't think they've either of them recovered yet from the scientific lecture they went to on Monday. I am sure, if I were a child, I should resent any attempt to improve my mind during the holidays. It's quite as bad as Tozer's uncle. Don't you recollect Tozer's uncle, aunt, in 'Dombey and Son,' who always took his nephew to exhibitions where he might ask him questions with regard to historical events, and so on. So poor Tozer had to read up before he went for a day's outing with his uncle. 'Oh, Tozer, read up for your uncle, there's a little dear!'"

"Beryl, my dear Beryl. Really——"

"I beg pardon, aunt; but those comic songs will run in my head so. I was playing a lot of them over last night for the children. By the way, I have been going all through Sir Arthur Sullivan's *Sorcerer* again. How refreshing that bright and sparkling music is!"

"Will you ring the bell, Beryl? I think I'll have a cup of tea."

"Yes, certainly, aunt ; and I think I'll have one, too."

' O now for the tea of our host,  
The bun and the hot buttered toast ;  
The eggs and the ham, and the strawberry jam,  
And the rollicking, rollicking bun.  
And the gay Sally Lunn, and the rollicking bun ;  
And the gay Sally Lunn, and the rollicking bun  
And the rollicking, rollicking bun, "'

sang the vivacious young lady.

"My dear Beryl," interposed Lady Ankerwyke.

"My dear aunt, that's from the *Sorcerer*. I always feel sorry that the Gilbert and Sullivan pieces have come to an end, but Charlie heard the other night at Mrs. Snargate's that they were both hard at work at a new piece that will be produced at the Savoy in the autumn. Now, you dear auntie, will you promise to take us all the first night?"

"My dear child, how you do run on! I certainly cannot go anywhere till I get rid of this terrible cold. I want particularly to go and see the Old Masters at Burlington House. What did you think of the exhibition?"

"Well, I suppose it was very good, aunt ; but do you know I was just a little bit bored. I suppose it was very wrong of me. And Maud Feyton, who's mad about Art, you know, and who paints very well herself—I promised to sit for her for something, I declare I forget what it is—told me all about Constable and Gainsborough, Hoppner, Sir Joshua, and Romney. She told me about the Norwich School and Old Crome. Don't you think it's rather rude to call an artist Old Crome? It

sounds so like a portrait painter in a farce. Old Crome ! Ha ! ha ! And do you know, aunt, I'm nearly certain that I saw the Great Unknown, my deliverer, my preserver—the Bayard with a blonde mustache—looking at the portrait of Mrs. Rattray by Romney. There ! ”

“ My dear—— ”

“ Yes, auntie, it's a fact. I just turned away to a picture Maud was pointing at, and when I looked again he was gone ! I verily believe he went through a trap in the floor.”

“ My dear child, you're fancying all sorts of things about this marvellous young man who officiated as amateur coachman the other night. I have heard of gentlemen who formerly held her Majesty's commission driving hansom-cabs ; so perhaps your preserver, as you call him, may be a hansom-cab driver out of employment.”

“ Oh, you bad auntie ! I declare I'll renounce my nieceship altogether if you talk in that way. Pray, would a hansom-cab driver be walking about at midnight in evening dress ? ”

“ I don't see what your paragon was doing in the middle of a Seven Dials mob at midnight—— ”

“ S-s-sh ! you ungrateful auntie. He was saving your beloved Beryl ! Do you think there are no more knights because suits of mail are substituted by evening dress ? Think you that as tee-reu a heart cannot beat beneath a snowy shirt-front as can palpitate under the panoply of war ? Go to ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! ” laughed Beryl, as she continued. “ Besides, you most unbelieving auntie—you are the most unbelievingest unbeliever that ever I did see—the hansom cabman out of employment would scarcely be likely to spend his time looking at Old Masters at Burlington House.”

"Though, perhaps, he might employ his leisure in looking at young misses!"

"Lady Ankerwyke," said her niece, with mock solemnity, "this is no time for merriment. Let me give you some tea, and let us be serious. You should not have gone out without wrapping up sufficiently, then you would not have caught cold, then would your niece have not got into all this trouble. This is the result of not taking your own Beryl's advice at first."

"I see I must make haste and get well, or you'll be getting into more mischief. Are you going out this afternoon? You might drive for a little while, I think."

"No, my dear aunt; it is getting too late. Besides, I fear the Bandits of Bloomsbury might waylay this poor maiden, and after the experiences of the other night I must be careful. Another thing, I've been routing out a lot of books upstairs, and I find some that I am ashamed to say that I have never read, but they are positively delightful."

"What are they?"

"Well, one is Hawley Smart's 'Breezie Langton.' I've just finished it; and a real, bright, dashing story it is, with plenty of healthy sentiment as well. And now I'm up to my eyes in Lewis Wingfield's 'Lady Grizel.' I'm so cross because they did not let that dear little Lady Sarah marry the Prince. I think I like her better than anybody in the book. I've just got to the part where Lady Grizel surprises them all by marrying the Duke—— But this house is just the very place of all others to read it in. Last night, when I was reading it in my bedroom, I seemed to quite drift back to the times, and live in the very period itself. I say, auntie, if I had lived in those times, and I had met my Bayard as I

did on Boxing Night, and I had disappeared and been married by a Fleet parson, and some day called on you as the Duchess of Tewkesbury—what would you have thought of that?"

Beryl was quite right. Lady Ankerwyke's house was the very place to read any book which treats of the early period of the House of Hanover or the reign of Queen Anne. It was the very spot to read "Esmond," and to thoroughly enjoy it. There are few portions of London less changed within the last twenty years than Great Ormond Street and its neighbourhood. It is true the building fiend and the great rage for improvement have not altogether spared it. There is the new wing of the Children's Hospital, concerning which Mrs. Keeley pleaded with such eloquence and to such good purpose, and there are other new buildings that have asserted themselves even more recently, but the main features of the street remain much as they have been for many years past. It has the same flavour of bygone grandeur, the same smack of faded gentility, the same savour of impoverished aristocracy about it that has ever clung to the place and its neighbourhood.

If you stroll up that quaint old street after dark, or walk along it just as twilight is deepening, you can indulge in many a dream of Old London, and can weave for yourself countless romances of long ago. Every house seems to tell its tale of faded fashion, and the scandal of bygone ages. In one room you might fancy Lady Betty Modely taking her dish of chocolate in bed, while her tirewoman was getting ready some marvellous costume to astonish the whole of Ranelagh; in another, Dorinda might be torturing the harpsichord, or teasing her pug dog; while in a third, Phyllis might be sub-

mitting to the final shower of hair-powder, or Belinda might be luxuriating in a fit of the vapours. Sometimes as you glance through the half-lighted windows you may see saloons suggestive of the courtly cotillion, or the stately *Menuet de la Cour*, or chambers that may hint green-clothed tables and crimp, basset, faro, and quadrille up to any time you please in the morning.

It is just the very street of all others in London in which you would not be at all surprised in meeting any number of sedan chairs. A four-wheel cab is out of harmony with the place, and a hansom you cannot tolerate. The only wheeled vehicle that seems suitable for the surroundings is Lady Ankerwyke's old-fashioned carriage, which looks almost as old as the street itself. After dark it would not astonish you in the least to be involved in one or two broils, to be called upon suddenly to "draw," and to have manfully to defend yourself with your umbrella. Indeed, one might almost fancy that the spirits of defunct Mohocks yet haunt the neighbourhood for the purpose of annoying respectable folk, and it would not surprise you to see the sedan chairs of Lady Dorothy and Lady Bab come round the corner, and their footmen put out their flambeaux at one of those gigantic extinguishers that are still affixed to some of the doorways.

Though its days of belles and of beaux, of rapiers and bag-wigs ; its times of the dancing of minuets, the rustling of brocaded skirts, and the flirting of fans ; its period of black servants, of hard-drinking bouts, and of "meetings behind Montague House" have quite passed away, Great Ormond Street is not altogether given over to charitable institutions and lodging-houses. There are yet some people of position residing there ; there are

several of the good old houses yet remaining ; and notably among these is that belonging to Lady Ankerwyke.

It is a fine old mansion of the age of Queen Anne. It is not very conspicuous from the outside, save on account of the exquisite workmanship of its brickwork—such work as the bricklayers of to-day could not achieve if they were paid any amount of money to do it—some finely-wrought iron palisading, a canopied doorway sheltering a massive door with a most elaborate knocker. The casual observer would note possibly nothing particular about this house ; but the lover of old buildings, and sterling, honest, British workmanship, would be charmed with this oasis in the desert of stucco, pale yellow bricks, and bogus sculpture, that London is fast becoming.

If charmed with the outside, he would be even more pleased with the interior. It is an oddly-built house, with a deal more room in it than the exterior would lead you to imagine. It is full of curious corners, cupboards, and powdering-rooms ; while at the very top of the house is a room at one time used as a chapel, but now converted into a play-room for Lady Ankerwyke's little nieces. There are odd staircases, quaint landings, and unaccountable corridors. The principal chamber looks on a small terrace paved with diamonds of black and white ; this is edged with ancient iron railings, and here are steps descending to a little bit of mouldy garden which has cost the present owner a small fortune in trying to render presentable. In the middle of the enclosure is a leaden statue of a naked figure, which is so old and has been so battered about by ill-usage, so time-stained and weather-beaten, that at the present moment it is impossible to

say if it was originally intended for Venus or Apollo Cupid or Psyche.

The fitting up of the house is quite in harmony with the house itself. Long, long before the "æsthetic craze" had taken the town; at a period far remote from the present rage for Morrisian wall-papers, for dados, for blue and white china, for sad colour hangings, and for indiscriminate *bric-à-brac*—Lady Ankerwyke had come to reside in this house. It had belonged to her family for many years, and on the death of her husband she left her country house for a time and went to live in Great Ormond Street. It was an odd fancy for her to take, but still it answered her purpose. She wanted perfect quiet, and it was a great amusement to her fitting up the place, buying old furniture, tapestry, and hangings, and gradually getting it to its present perfection. Having done this, she had such a liking to the place that nothing would induce her to leave it. She let her house in Chesham Place, and whenever she came to town, which was pretty often, she stayed in Great Ormond Street.

People said she was eccentric, but the simple fact was she did as she pleased. She loved quiet, and most assuredly she had that in her present abode. Though she did not see much company, she was very fond of having people to stay with her, and nobody's society did she like better than that of her niece Beryl. Captain Halibourne, a nephew of her husband, called in this unfashionable quarter pretty frequently. People said—but then you know what people say is frequently wrong altogether—that Halibourne would eventually have the greater part of the old lady's money. And it was also rumoured that Lady Ankerwyke was very desirous of making a match between her nephew and her niece.

Then she could leave all her property to her two favourites.

Though those two were no relations whatever, they had been so much thrown together at their mutual aunt's, both in town and country, ever since they were children, that a very pleasant sort of cousinhood had been established. They had romped together, they had gone for madcap races on ponies, they had even had a turn at birds'-nesting in company, when he was an Eton boy and she was in short frocks. They called one another "Charlie" and "Bee," and conducted themselves generally in cousinly fashion. But probably they knew one another too well to have any idea of aiding and abetting the carrying out of what people averred was their aunt's pet project.

Beryl's father, Colonel Cheyn, lost all his property in some unfortunate speculations, and his wife died when their daughter was but a child. Beryl was sent to school and the colonel travelled abroad. In Rome he met with Miss Curleywayne, the heiress, whom he subsequently married. Her fortune enabled him to return to the old family mansion Mossmoore, and keep it up in its original fashion. They had two daughters—the little girls already mentioned. The colonel died soon after the birth of the last, and his wife survived him about six years. It was found by the second Mrs. Cheyn's will that all her property went to her own children, and that there was only a moderate sum left to Beryl, on the condition that she would look after and be in some wise a guardian to her two half-sisters. Thus the little girls would be very well off, while Beryl had next to nothing. As she often had been heard laughingly to declare, she was a "naughty girl," quoting Miss Kilmansegg to the

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effect that she had long been forcibly impressed with the fact "that people with naught were naughty." Lady Ankerwyke had been left guardian to Beryl, and, on the death of the second Mrs. Cheyn, the three girls had all come to reside in Great Ormond Street.

Lady Ankerwyke and Beryl were half-slumbering over the fire. Bunnidge had just brought in the candles—there is not a single jet of gas to be found in this house from attic to basement—when they heard the big knocker go.

"There they are," said Beryl, as she jumped up.

And in came Captain Halibourne with Beryl's two little sisters, Flo and Baby. They were a couple of bonny children, of ten and twelve—real honest, rosy-cheeked, hearty little lasses—and uncommonly nice they looked in their little black velvet Dame Trot hats, their grey jackets trimmed with chinchilla, their short frocks showing their shapely legs in sable hose. They were not unlike Beryl; they had her blue-grey eyes, their hair was lighter, and it was cropped in Gainsborough-like fashion across the forehead. They had a keen sense of enjoyment and a great appreciation of fun, and had nothing whatever of the *blasé* "child of the period" about them. Ever since the Drury Lane pantomime they had been striving to imitate various portions of the entertainment; they never went to see anything but they attempted to reproduce it in some form or other.

"Well, how have you enjoyed yourselves? What did you see? It was awfully good of you to take the children out, Charlie. I hope they behaved properly."

"No, it was awfully good of them to take *me* out. I never go anywhere unless I'm 'took.'"

"Oh, we had such fun," cut in Flo. "We saw 'All at

Sea,' and 'The Dolls' House' was splendid: we're going to do it to-night; and Mr. Corney Grain—it isn't a real name, is it, Bee? It sounds like the name in a pantomime—Miller: Mr. Corney Grain—sang 'Boys and Girls,' and we shouted! And then we saw——"

"And then we saw," said the captain, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"And then we saw," said Baby, with a laugh.

"And then you three conspirators saw what?" asked Beryl.

"It wasn't a what!" said Halibourne.

"It wasn't a which!" said Flo.

"Nor a they, nor a she, nor an it," said Baby. "It was——"

"Come—you children had better come and take your things off at once," said Beryl, as she hurried them out of the room. "I'm certain you've all been behaving very badly."

## CHAPTER III.

## IN CHURCH.

PROBABLY there is nothing so disagreeable as being stranded on Sunday in London, and having to dine at the club.

Caversham found it so to his cost one Sunday, some weeks after his romantic adventure in Bloomsbury. He had four invitations to dinner, and had accepted one of them. On Sunday morning he received a message to the effect that the dinner was put off on account of illness in the family, and so he was compelled to fall back on the Oleander. He made a lot of calls in the morning; he endeavoured to hunt up friends to dine with him—but all to no purpose. The Oleander is particularly dull on Sundays; all the most uninteresting people turn up, together with a curious set of fossils that you never see on other days. One has often been inclined to ask whether these are bogus members, who are kept in the cellar all the week and turned on on Sundays by the committee in order to make the place lively, and give trouble to the waiters.

One thing, however, is certain—they do not make the place lively, but they probably give more trouble to the waiters than all the other members put together. Caver-

sham was certainly in a bad temper ; all the nice people he had called upon were out, and all the dull people were at home. Just as a foggy twilight was closing in he looked in at the *Oleander*. He had the morning-room all to himself, and he had well-nigh gone through all the weekly and Sunday papers. In sheer desperation he dined early, and found himself growling very much in the smoking-room afterwards.

He felt very much irritated with two harmless old gentlemen who kept up an everlasting babble, and read extracts from a newspaper. It was "Mumble, mumble, mumble—certainly high time some action was taken in the matter—mumble, mumble, mumble—we understand that last Sunday morning only three and twenty persons attended the church of St. Ticklish Tonsure, and the congregation at the evening service at St. Tympanum-by-the-Wardrobe consisted of eight grown persons and two small children—mumble, mumble, mumble."

Jack brightened at this, for it gave him an idea. He would pay a visit to an old musical friend, Dayne, who had recently accepted the appointment of organist in an old Bloomsbury church. He had not a clear idea where the church was situated, and he found it was getting near the hour of evening service. However, a swift hansòm put him down somewhere in the neighbourhood. He wandered about, asked questions of policemen, followed in the wake of those he thought looked like church-going folk, and by the time he reached his destination the bell had ceased, and there was no doubt about it he was very late. He began to question himself whether he would go in or not.

His labours, however, were by no means over yet. Although he was within a stone's throw of his friend, and

could hear the organ booming away in the distance, he was by no means clear how he should reach him. After he entered the principal door, he found himself in a panelled vestibule that had a smell something between an old library and a family vault. In the dim light he could manage to distinguish some old benches, a few leathern buckets, and an inscription in faded gilt letters something about "churchwardens." He was wondering whether he should have to wander about in this vestibule all night, when he espied a door with oval glass windows, protected by a green curtain, which made them look like "port" lanterns grown old and serious. He opened this, and found himself opposite to another glazed door, through which he could have a full view of the church.

Here he stood till he was conscious the eyes of the more wakeful portion of the congregation were upon him, and were viewing him in the light of a depraved criminal in a glass case—just as they used to regard Marat in his bath at Madame Tussaud's Waxworks. Then, when he imagined a suitable opportunity had arrived to enter and interrupt the service as little as possible, he opened the door with that peculiar difficulty, scroop, and clatter, which seems to be the especial attribute of all doors at quiet churches on Sunday evenings, and entered. Whereupon the pew-opener, an active little lady, with a face like a withered apple, bore down upon him and whispered mysteriously—

"Seat, sir?"

"No; Mr. Dayne," answered Jack.

The pew-opener, who was a little deaf, beckoned furtively, sailed up to the top of the aisle, and threw open the door of a roomy pew; but on looking round she saw this belated worshipper still standing where she left him.

"I want Mr. Dayne," said Jack, when she returned, so loudly that he awoke the beadle out of his first sleep, and caused him to look fiercely and shake his head at a small boy who was playing with his prayer-book.

"Oh! the Horgin, sir; beg pardon, this way, please."

And she opened a door, and Caversham found himself shunted into a mysterious chamber, with apparently no outlet, but where he could hear the organ grunting and growling overhead. After feeling his way round two sides of the room he discovered a small doorway with a smaller staircase—like the companion-ladder of a steamboat—whose steps were very steep, and creaked alarmingly at every footfall. He proceeded up the staircase till he knocked his head severely and unexpectedly against what he imagined to be a particularly hard ceiling.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed, rubbing his head, as the ceiling, which in reality was a trap-door, opened, and he saw the smiling face of Willy Dayne.

Now, Dayne was an old friend of Caversham's, and for one so young had made already a marvellous position for himself in the musical profession. He was equally at home on the organ and piano, and was generally supposed to be able to play any instrument, from the hurdy-gurdy to the violoncello; he could play with similar facility the accompaniment to a comic song, or the most difficult compositions of Beethoven. He composed all kinds of music himself, and some of his latest efforts became vastly popular, and were already beginning to be whistled in the streets.

"S-s-sh! Don't swear, Jack," whispered Dayne. "What a jolly row you've been making on the stairs! Couldn't think who it was."

"Well, it's enough to make a fellow swear, I'm sure,"

replied Jack, still ruefully rubbing his head. "I never saw such a confounded breakneck place in all my——"

"Get out of the way!" said the organist, suddenly springing to his seat, sharply pulling out stops and plunging at pedals, as if he were working a beer-engine and a bicycle at the same time. And thereupon a mysterious gurgling, knocking, and pumping, horribly suggestive of blowing-up, began to take place behind the organ. Then Dayne gave a glance at the mirror over his head, where he could see a reflection of the clergyman, and began playing the prelude to the hymn.

While this was going on, Caversham's temper was soothed. He forgot all about his contused head, and found plenty to amuse him with the novelty of his situation. The gallery itself was particularly warm and snug. Its occupants were concealed from the congregation by means of a curtain running on a brass rail, and composed of red serge, such as you only find in old-fashioned churches, and the tap-rooms of country public-houses. This curtain, however, by no means prevented those in the gallery having a good view of the congregation through the various apertures and rents which time and circumstance had made in its fabric. The organ itself was so ancient and weatherbeaten that it looked as if it might have played a march of triumph on the occasion of the accession of Queen Anne.

It had a battered, mellow, mahogany case. There were two rows of keys, so worn and shabby that they looked like old yellow teeth that might drop out at any minute; and there were stops labelled "Hautboy Swell," "Principal Swell," "Stopped Diapason," "Cremona," and "Sesquialtera," which were enough to cause considerable speculation by the uninitiated. Jack found himself wondering whether

the "principal swell" was really such a swell after all, and what "diapason" had done that it should be stopped ; and then, glancing upwards, he noticed the mirror, in which the priest, clerk, and congregation appeared to be singing very much out of the perpendicular. Above this towered the vast pipes, looking like dusty old gilt masts bereft of rigging and cross-trees. If you looked below the organ, the floor appeared by no means safe. It seemed to be composed of a shifting tangle of gas-pipes and bamboo-canes, into which the organist was continually plunging his feet in a mad and vindictive manner.

When the hymn had come to a conclusion, Caversham and his friend turned round, and, sitting on the well-worn leather-covered bench, were enabled to take a comprehensive bird's-eye view of the church and its congregation. It was rather more cheerful than the majority of such buildings, inasmuch as it had no gallery surrounding it to block out light in daytime, and add to its sombreness at night. It had a large and elaborately-carven rood-screen, which was the show-piece of the place ; and occasionally enthusiastic Americans would come and look at it, and give the beadle or the pew-opener half a crown. So the rood-screen was mightily respected and well looked after by the church officials. Beyond this, in the dim light, might be seen the altar, with its well-worn velvet cushions, its black carvings, and balustrade surmounted by a dusty Decalogue, well-nigh invisible by reason of age and neglect. Here and there might be seen wonderful old mural tablets, commemorating the good deeds of rare old benefactors who had long passed away ; and one could not fail to notice the gigantic double-grated fireplace in the middle of the aisle, that

the beadle always persisted in poking violently during the most moving part of the sermon.

As Dayne and Caversham looked down from their vantage ground they noticed many curious things. They saw the backs of everybody's bonnets, they observed faulty arrangements with regard to ties and collars, and they also noted that the clergyman had a good-sized bald place on the top of his head, although to the majority of his parishioners he appeared to be luxuriantly thatched. The pews were very high and of dark oak, and of all shapes and sizes, which threw up a few venerable heads in startling relief. Some of these enclosures were large enough for a family party : they were like ecclesiastical loose boxes, and seemed especially adapted for slumber ; others were mere slips, with no space for your knees, and were so painfully uncomfortable that the sleepest person would be compelled to keep awake during the longest and driest discourse on record.

Jack could see one or two persons were comfortably composing themselves already in the loose boxes, and were beginning to wriggle uncomfortably in the slips. He saw two young men shaking with laughter, and endeavouring to smother it by cramming their pocket-handkerchiefs into their mouths. He also saw a respectable young fellow and a pretty girl, who ought to have known better, flirting disgracefully ; and he noted the free seats sparsely occupied by a few old ladies in grey cloaks and wondrous bonnets, whose faces had not been seen within the memory of living man.

All these things Caversham saw, but noticed not at the time. They were like an undeveloped photograph on his brain, which came out with a marvellous clearness and

elaboration when he thought of the scene afterwards. He put up his glass, and his eye wandered about here and there. Presently he fixed his gaze upon a pew just under the screen, wherein were seated a young lady and two little girls, and giving Dayne a terrific nudge with his elbow, and dropping his glass at the same time, exclaimed sharply—

“There they are!”

“S-s-sh! What do you mean? There who are? Who are ‘they’?”

Caversham replied by nodding and winking in the direction of the aforesaid pew. “Who are they?” he asked.

“Don’t know at all. Don’t you? Only seen them here twice. Fond of music, I fancy. They always stop to the end of the voluntary, especially if I play something out of the common.”

Caversham looked again to be sure he was making no mistake. Undoubtedly the lady sitting before him was the same that he saw in the box at Drury Lane Theatre on Boxing Night, that he rescued in Endell Street, and subsequently drove home to Great Ormond Street. He was not quite certain of it at first, but looking again steadily he was quite sure of it. How charming she looked against the background of the dark oak pew! And those two bonny children, he was convinced, were the same that he saw at the pantomime. He could not help recalling to himself some lines which he had once read somewhere, he could not for the life of him remember where: “She sits in a high, ancient, black oaken pew—which almost conceals her fair face from my view—the sweetest of pictures, it can’t be denied—with two tiny sisters who sit by her side—who lisp the responses, or

kneel down to pray—with little hands locked in the palm of Saint May.”

He then wondered whether her name was May, and what her surname was, and how he could find out. He blamed himself for not having called in Ormond Street. Indeed, Jack Caversham, who usually did not trouble himself much about anything or anybody, found himself beginning to take an immense deal of interest in somebody he might possibly never see again. But it suddenly struck him what an excellent opportunity this was for apologizing for not having called, and that he would get away quickly and be just in time to meet his unknown friends at the door and make explanations.

He therefore listened to the remainder of the sermon with considerable impatience, and it is to be feared very much that Jack did not pay much attention to the words of exhortation that fell from the good man who occupied the pulpit. It was rather a relief when the words, “And, finally, my brethren,” were uttered; and he felt considerably comforted when his friend turned round and commenced to play the voluntary.

Contrary to their usual custom the “Saint May party,” as Jack was beginning to call the young lady and her sisters, did not await the conclusion of Dayne’s performance, and when Caversham reached the porch of the church he was only just in time to see a certain old-fashioned carriage, drawn by a pair of plump, lazy horses, drive away.

## CHAPTER IV.

## DIPLOMACY AND DOUBT.

THERE was no doubt about it, the revival of *Diplomacy* at the Garrick Theatre was a very great event. Saturday, February 18, 1893, was a memorable night to most people, and it turned out to be one of especial importance to Mr. Jack Caversham.

He among many there present could remember its first production at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, when under the management of Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, some fifteen years previously. Jack was only a boy then, but on the strength of his having witnessed the initial performance he gave himself the air of a very old playgoer. And from the knowing way he shook his head, and the important airs he assumed, you might think he had assisted at some of the early triumphs of Edmund Kean and the Kembles. There were other playgoers there, however, who could carry their memory back somewhat further, who could recollect squeezing into the little house in Tottenham Street when it was first opened by Miss Marie Wilton with *The Winning Hazard*, and the burlesque of *La Sonnambula*; or, the *Supper*, the *Sleeper*, and the *Merry Swiss Boy*. There were many more who remembered

the production of Tom Robertson's *Society*, and there were still more who recollected *Ours*, *Caste*, *Play*, and *School*, and other dramas which became a speciality at this theatre, and established an entirely new school on the British stage distinguished for careful rehearsal, elaborate finish, and studious attention to the most minute detail and most trivial accessory.

At five minutes to eight there was scarcely a seat unfilled in any part of the house. It gave one more the idea of a theatrical entertainment at a large country mansion than anything else. Everybody seemed to know everybody else. People were shaking hands with one another in the stalls, and those in the boxes were waving recognitions to their friends in the dress circle. It seemed like a large family party, with every one having the best possible wishes for the welfare of the host. To make the thing complete, a little while before the curtain went up the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, and the Duke and Duchess of Fife, took their seats in a private box.

Jack Caversham was in his place at ten minutes to eight, so was Drayton Drawler, so was Dolly Lamer, so were twenty other men who are in the habit of dropping in during the middle of the first act. From the moment of the entrance of Mrs. Bancroft, who had a tremendous reception, there was no doubt about the emphatic success of the revival, and the enthusiasm of the audience was again thoroughly aroused by the fine rendering of the notable three men scene in the second act, and Miss Rorke's passionate impersonation.

Caversham had been so much occupied in witnessing the play, and in talking to friends in his immediate neighbourhood, that he had scarcely glanced round the house. When, however, the hum of congratulation had

somewhat died away, and people were beginning to stand up and move about, he took a general look round. He put up his glass and was slowly making the circuit of the boxes, when he came to a sudden stop and nearly dropped it. There again was *the* face—there was the face of Drury Lane, the face of the old church in Bloomsbury, and, to his surprise, there was Captain Halibourne, whom he knew passing well as a club acquaintance, in the same box. Halibourne smiled and nodded ; he turned towards the lady, and they exchanged a few words and laughed. He presently left the box, and Caversham, who was on his way to find some friends in the dress circle, met him in the lobby.

“How are you, Caversham? Just the man I was looking for. I’ve been signalling to you all the evening, but you *would* look just in the opposite direction. I believe the man who sat next you thought I was chaffing him. I want you to come up and be introduced to Miss Cheyn. I’ve heard all sorts of things about your rescuing her from a frantic mob in Bloomsbury—fighting half a dozen giants, and throttling an unknown quantity of inebriated coachmen. How long have you established yourself as such a useful member of society? Come along! What a lot of people there are here to-night! Everybody one knows.”

And he led the way to the box.

“Miss Cheyn—Mr. Caversham,” said he. “I discovered him with great difficulty, Bee, and here he is. Now, I’m just going to run round to see the Clarrymores, and explain why I can’t come next Sunday. I’ll be back directly.”

“I am so glad to see you, Mr. Caversham,” said Beryl. “I want to thank you so much for all the trouble you

took the other night. If it had not been for you I don't know what would have become of us. Aunt has been going to write and thank you, but we did not know even your name and address. The children thought they saw you the other afternoon at St. George's Hall, but were not quite sure. If it had not been for Charlie suddenly saying he knew you to-night, when I pointed you out, I don't suppose we ever should have discovered you."

Jack bowed, though he felt an inward pang at the free way she talked about "Charlie."

"I am afraid," continued she, laughing, and her delicious dimples playing at hide-and-seek more than ever, "that you had terrible trouble with the carriage at the Mews. They are so very stupid there, and it was too bad to make you take it round after all your kindness. But really, you know, I was at my wits' end. The coachman was ill, and as for Bunnidge, he was not half so well able to take the horses round as I am. Indeed, if it had been in the country I should not have minded in the least. It really was very good of you."

Jack protested he had enjoyed the whole affair very much, and then he asked Miss Cheyn what she thought of the comedy.

"Well, I never was more pleased with anything in my life. How admirable are Mr. Bancroft and Mr. Forbes Robertson! And how excellent Mr. Hare is! I haven't seen him since the *Pair of Spectacles*. But Mrs. Bancroft—oh, how charming she is! Do you know I have never seen her before, and I am more delighted with her than I can possibly tell."

"She is an actress of such wonderful resource, such thought and finish, that really I envy any one the pleasure

of seeing her for the first time, and yet feel inclined to condole with them on account of all they have missed. It is really too bad that she has never appeared on the stage since she retired from the management of the Haymarket Theatre."

"But she is only going to play here for a month, I think."

"So they say. But when once the British public get an old favourite back, they are very loth to give her up."

"What a magnificent reception she had to-night!"

"Yes, it was glorious! And I hear that a lot of her friends are going to present her with a bracelet behind the scenes after the play is over. This I was told as a great secret, and I oughtn't to tell you. But I dare say, Miss Cheyn, you can keep a secret——"

"Yes," answered the young lady, with a flash of fun in her pretty eyes, "even better than you can, Mr. Caversham. I don't think you would make a good Baron Stein. By the way, how admirably Mr. Arthur Cecil played the character; but it's such a small part, and we see so little of him. What a lot of people are here to-night! I suppose you know every one, Mr. Caversham?"

"Well, not every one, Miss Cheyn. Yes, it's pretty full to-night. It's what the newspapers call a 'representative house.' I, however, don't happen to be a representative person."

"I'm quite certain *I'm* not."

"Then we're both a couple of nobodies; but perhaps I may be able to show you a few of the somebodies," he added, feeling a thrill of delight in their temporary partnership in nobodyism.

And he proceeded at once to point out to her a number of the notable authors, painters, musicians, legal luminaries, leaders of fashion, and political celebrities who happened to be present.

"I have understood," said he, "that Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft may be said to have inaugurated the success of such evenings as this. Before the Prince of Wales's Theatre was established, the best people never used to go to a play till it was what they called in good working order. Of course a first night here is an especial thing. But at many places the function is getting over-done, and the next thing you will see that people will be struggling to go to dress rehearsals. That will probably suit some of them better ; for there they would go for nothing. But on an occasion like this to-night of course every one pays, except the critics——"

"And where have you been to all this time, Charlie?" said Miss Cheyn, as he entered.

"Well, I don't know where I *haven't* been to. First I went over to the Clarrymores' box. And I was a long time getting there, for I met Dolly Lamer, who wanted to know all about our little play—what we were going to do, when it was going to be done, and whether we had a good part for him."

"Are you fond of acting, Mr. Caversham?" said Beryl. "We're trying to get some performances, but I don't know whether we shall be able to accomplish it. Aunt doesn't want the house upset, and says she's quite sure people won't come all the way to Great Ormond Street to see the very finest play that ever was written. Oh, there goes the curtain up again!"

Jack took leave of his friends, and made his way back to his stall, and was obliged to content himself with a

distant view of Miss Cheyn for the rest of the evening. At the fall of the curtain there was but little doubt that the management had scored a most distinct success by the revival of an old favourite most admirably played. You could tell this by the observations you heard as you slowly passed out of the theatre. "Mrs. Bancroft was simply marvellous!"—"Going down to the club?"—"Don't grudge my half-guinea to-night"—"I should think not indeed"—"I'll join you in a hansom"—"Wonderful finish about Forbes Robertson"—"Bancroft excellent"—"Safe run for the season"—"Hope it's not raining"—"Certainly the finest thing Miss Rorke ever did"—"Wait while I see after the carriage"—"Yes, in Edmund Yates's excellent verses about the first production at the old Prince of Wales's"—"Wasn't Miss Nethersole just delightful as Zicka?"—"Come in to luncheon to-morrow"—"Superbly put on the stage"—"Left my opera-glass behind"—"I've lost the number of my coat"—"I shall certainly come and see this again——" All these things were said and a great deal more as people passed out.

In the lobby there was a crowd of ladies waiting for carriages—there was an odour of freshly kindled cigarettes, and Caversham felt in his pocket for his case. Just as he was doing this, he heard a pleasant voice saying, at the same time that a little hand in a grey glove was extended from beneath a white fleecy cloak—

"Well, good night, Mr. Caversham!"

He found that Halibourne had gone to see after the carriage, and so he waited till it was announced, and had the satisfaction of escorting her to it. That ancient equipage seemed to be quite familiar to him now, and

when Miss Cheyn bade him good night from the window, again it puzzled him what made her face so familiar, and with what events in his life of some years ago it was associated. He thought this matter over as he buttoned up his coat, and lit a cigar. He strolled briskly down to the club, and began to find he was falling very deeply in love with Miss Cheyn, although at the same time he was in doubt as to whether she was not already engaged to Halibourne.

## CHAPTER V.

## BEAUTY AND PAINT.

"HEAD a little more to the right, Mc," said Harry Heysham.

"How's that, Mr. Heysham?" said his model, with a coquettish smile as she moved her head in the direction indicated.

"Charming," replied the artist as he lazily puffed a cigarette and critically contemplated the young girl before him.

This conversation took place in Mr. Heysham's studio, which studio might be found in an ancient, autumnal square, which though somewhat out of the beaten track is well known to many. It was certainly not an artists' quarter; it was most assuredly not fashionable, neither could it be said to be popular. It was not in the right situation for family men, who wanted a large house at a moderate rent, nor was it near enough to the City to be utilized for offices, nor close enough to any inn of court to make it valuable for chambers for solicitors and barristers. Between fashion and respectability, law and commerce, this handsome, well-built square well-nigh came to the ground, and had sunk into a stately

decrepitude in the autumn of its days. Curiously enough it always seems to be autumn in these parts.

There is ever that atmosphere of melancholy decay that we only associate with the dullest season of the year. Go round the place what time you will : in the brightest morning in spring, or the hottest afternoon in summer, you will feel a deadly chill in the atmosphere, and hear the rattle of dry leaves along the roadway. There is no thoroughfare through the square, so it is just possible the dry leaves continue to blow round and round it all the year ; and the few meagre trees in the dismal enclosure shed enough foliage to keep the square in gloomy reminiscence from autumn to autumn. Though rents were undoubtedly moderate in this square it was not often you found houses vacant ; they were mostly occupied by people entirely in harmony with its autumnal characteristics.

There were several mouldy boarding-houses with decayed landladies and sere and bilious boarders ; there were one or two withered lodging-houses with shrivelled occupants ; there were societies for the relief of wrecked humanity, mostly under the care of a depressed secretary, assisted by a faded Board, which came once a week and transacted business in a melancholy sort of way ; there were a few sad merchants whose trade seem so uncertain that it was only worth their while to visit their offices occasionally. Besides these there were low-spirited agents who never had sufficient energy to have their windows cleaned, and feeble publishers who brought out books in parcels, mostly of an educational, theological, or disputatious character, which nobody ever bought but subscribers, and few people ever read.

Despite the sad, weary, autumnal character of the

square, there were one or two houses that were notably bright and cheerful when you happened to get inside them, and chief among these was undoubtedly Number Forty-two. It was a roomy house with a wide staircase, perhaps one of the oldest in the square. On the ground-floor front was the Knock-Kneed Benevolent Society, and over this was a large saloon which served as Heysham's studio. Indeed, besides the Knock-Kneed Benevolent there were no other tenants, so, virtually, Heysham had the house to himself. The secretary of the occult society on the ground floor did not interfere with anybody : he only came when he pleased, which was not very often, and only made himself obnoxious when there was some talk of the Charity Commissioners disestablishing the Knock-Kneed Benevolent, and then he called a special meeting of the Board, made himself generally disagreeable, and objected to everything and interfered with everybody.

On a dull, biting March day you could scarcely find a more cheerless place than this odd, old-fashioned square, and, as a contrast, on a miserable March afternoon, when it began to promise to be foggy, you could scarcely run into a snugger port than Heysham's studio. Let us walk in ; past the Knock-Kneed Benevolent, up the broad staircase with its spiral balusters ; let us push open a door on the first floor, and we shall find ourselves in the studio, or the Den, as this apartment is usually called. It is a lofty room with an elaborately moulded ceiling, with a marvellous mantelpiece and panelled walls. A large three-windowed bow is at the end of the room ; two of the windows are blocked up altogether, and the centre one is darkened all but the upper panes. A stream of light pours down from this aperture and illu-

mines the head of the fair young girl who is sitting to the painter, and whose wondrous hair glows about her head like a *nimbus*. A bright fire is burning in the old-fashioned grate ; there is nothing new nor raw about the room, the whole place looks thoroughly seasoned, so to speak, and has the tone of an old picture about it.

There are curious old chairs, quaint carven cabinets, ancient oak presses, Cordovan leather screens, bits of armour, casts, draperies, costumes, and a lay figure grotesquely distorted in the background. The walls are so closely covered with studies, sketches, and water-colour drawings and prints, that it is indeed difficult to say what their original tint might have been. A striking contrast to all these art treasures and old-fashioned lumber are the two young people who figure in the scene. If you had cut the figures out of a picture by Meissonnier and introduced a couple of merry young people in the costume of the end of the Nineteenth Century, you could not have possibly obtained a contrast more complete.

There was Harry, one of the pleasantest fellows you could wish to meet, well-grown, broad-shouldered, and a certain amount of well-knit muscularity in his figure, which, had he lived in the country, and devoted himself to athletic pursuits, would probably have developed into great strength. His features were well formed, though one would scarcely call his face handsome in repose, but when his grey eye twinkled at some bit of fun, and he twirled up his mustachios or ran his fingers through his closely-cropped thick brown hair, there seemed to be something so winning and genial about him, that one almost felt inclined to accord him the claim of being good looking, as well as the two attributes universally allowed him by his friends—cleverness and kindhearted-

ness. He had already made some mark in his profession ; he had cut out a line for himself, he was a hard worker, though, it must be confessed, he worked by fits and starts. There were many bilious "high art" professors, gentlemen who wore their hair long and affected all sorts of eccentricity in the way of costume, who said that he did not think sufficiently of the dignity of his profession, and even went so far as to say that he looked at his art too much from a commercial point of view.

The real fact was he did not believe in what he was pleased to call the "humbug of genius." He did not see what right any one had to make a grievance out of the fact that the British public would not buy a particular class of picture. He was not a rich man, and he felt that if he pleased to paint he must paint to please ; if his big picture did not sell he would turn its face to the wall and set to work joyfully on "pot-boilers." If one thing did not answer his purpose he would try another ; he did a prodigious quantity of work in black and white for the illustrated papers, and his enemies averred that he would have designed Paris fashions, painted tea-trays and public-house signs, could he have made it worth his while. Be that as it may, he always had plenty to do ; he never had a feud with the Academy, nor did he growl about the want of art patronage in England. Better still, he was always able to live comfortably, and did not go about a genteel pauper with a grievance and the knack of continually borrowing small sums from over-confiding friends—a condition, by the way, that your vast unpractical genius not infrequently arrives at. So much for Harry Heysham.

The young lady whose portrait he was now engaged

upon was Miss Mignonne Batiste, but known more frequently among her friends as Me. She was engaged for small speaking parts at the Trifle Theatre, and happened, by the indisposition of one of the principals, to get a chance in the new burlesque. Of this opportunity she had successfully availed herself, and was already becoming vastly popular. She was as pretty a little girl of eighteen as you could desire to meet, and had the most superb head of hair, of the real deep "Titian tint" with gleams of gold in it. As a great favour she was sitting to our friend for a charming picture he was painting. Heysham appeared to be in the best of spirits; he was working away his hardest, for the light was just beginning to fail, and between touches on the painting, puffs from a cigarette, snatches of operas and comic songs, he contrived to keep up a continual fire of conversation with his sitter, so that she was thoroughly amused and entirely lost that wearied, insipid look that sitters too often assume.

"How's *Prince Patissier* go now, Me, since they've cut the third scene?" asked Heysham.

"A good deal better," replied Mignonne; "they've taken out the Bon-Bon Dance, so we get a longer rest."

"I shall look in again to-morrow night. I see the papers go into raptures over Mademoiselle Batiste's quaint dress, and when I reflect that *I* designed that costume I feel covered with glory."

"It's the prettiest dress of the whole lot, Mr. Heysham. Miss Dasolite, who plays Prince Patissier, was asking me all about it——"

"My goodness, Me, don't you tell Miss Dasolite anything about it, or I shall have all the young ladies from the Trifle Theatre coming here in a body and insisting

upon my designing their dresses. You want to be off now?" he added, seeing the little lady glancing at the clock.

"Well, Mr. Heysham, it's a quarter to four, and I wish, if possible, to get home by a quarter past; and the light's going."

"One moment, and your grace shall be liberated," replied Harry, as he softened the hair into the flesh-tint of the forehead with his finger. There, and there, and there.

" 'And now, my friend, as business is most pressing, I'll thus dismiss you briefly with my blessing.' "

"Ha! ha! ha!" pealed Mignonne, musically, as she jumped from the throne, recognizing a quotation from the popular burlesque in which she was engaged. She then struck an attitude, and began—

" 'Friends, countrymen, dairymaids, and daughters,  
Foes, magistrates, publicans, and porters.' "

Ha! ha! ha! that's the beginning of Miss Dasolite's speech, you know. Then at the end I have my speech about Baby Bon-Bon's pastrycook lover.

' His *gages d'amour* have sweet *meringues* for caskets,  
And love-notes come in barley-sugar baskets;  
He'll send a sonnet, p'r'aps, or loving ballad,  
Enveloped in the choicest lobster salad.  
A mayonnaise for lunch he'll sometimes take her,  
Which isn't right, it may onaisy make her.' "

I always get a laugh there. And then——"

Heysham began to whistle the air of the "Tank," which formed the basis of the most popular song and dance in the entire piece.

"Yes, yes," exclaimed the little lady, excitedly, as she threw down her hat and began to sing—

" 'Tis well, to dwell, in barley-sugar palaces,  
 And take, *hard-bake*, whenever we incline ;  
 We laugh, and quaff sweet nectar out of chalices,  
 And praise, *all* our days, Princess Saccharine !  
 Ev'ry kind of luxury you'd like to see your plate upon,  
 With brandy-balls for breakfast, we're careful to provide ;  
 Snowy sugar icing is quite good enough to skate upon,  
 Fine old sponge-cake elephants are very safe to ride ! "

"Capital, capital, Me !" interrupted Harry. "And then the dance, you know," he added, as he began to hum the air and gave a walk round.

"No, no ! NO !! NO !!!" shouted Me ; "it begins like this. You sing it !"

And Heysham stood up gravely and began to sing the lively music, taking a mahl-stick to serve as a species of imitation banjo. Me gravely gave the "walk round," and then faced about and did the break-down, Heysham facing her and coming in where he could, which was not always in the right place. At last, just at the finish, which was done in double-quick time, Me brought her foot down with a stamp, bent her head forward, and all her beautiful hair fell in a torrent over her face. She looked up, laughed, and shook her locks back ; and then Heysham saw a terrified expression come into her countenance, as she glanced at a reflection in the cheval glass, and then it changed to a sunny smile, as she said—

"Why, here's Mr. Caversham !"

"Yes," answered that gentleman, as he walked in. "How are you, Miss Batiste ? How do, Heysham ? I've been knocking for the last ten minutes. But you've both been making such a row, so I turned the handle

and came in, and here I am. This is what you call hard work, is it?"

"Yes. Considering the state of the atmosphere, I think I've done a fair day's work. Don't you?" answered Heysham.

"Well, let's have a look. I've just come from the Old Masters, and so am prepared to criticize the New. Let's see if you can beat Sir Joshua, or Romney, or even Hoppner. Excellent!" he continued, approaching the easel. "My dear Harry, quite the best thing you've done, and ought to make a sensation. Don't you think it very good, Miss Batiste?" he added, turning to the little lady, who was busy getting ready to depart.

"I really don't know, Mr. Caversham," replied Mignonette, as she settled a coquettish little hat on, and patted her rebellious tresses into submission. "I'm not allowed to see it. Isn't it too bad?"

"Well, it's nearly finished now," replied the artist, "so you may have just a peep at it to-night. But, mind, tell me exactly what you think of it."

"Really?"

"Yes, really."

She regarded the picture with a pleased and puzzled expression. She locked her hands in front of her, bending her fingers back, and gazed for a long time at it.

"It's very lovely," she said, with a sigh. "I wish I were half as pretty."

"I can assure you, Me, it is not half pretty enough for you. I must say, as Gainsborough said to the Duchess of Devonshire, 'Your Grace is too beautiful for me.' Sir John Millais liked the picture very much when he saw it yesterday, and everybody has been wild to know the

name of the fair original. But that is a secret that I keep locked up in my——”

“Don’t be silly, Mr. Heysham,” interrupted Miss Batiste, who had been nodding her head gravely while he was talking, and tapped her foot impatiently at the latter portion of his discourse; “I must be off. I shall be late if I don’t go at once. Good-bye, pretty Mignonne, your ugly sister wishes you adieu,” she added, as she crossed her arms over her bosom and made a most profound mock-curtsy to the picture. “Will you call at the theatre to-night?”

“Very likely,” answered the artist.

“I shall have the good luck to see you in *Prince Patissier* one day next week,” said Caversham. “I’m going to bring Doctor Greyfinne.”

“Good! Be sure be in time for my scene. Give my love to the doctor, and tell him to applaud. I shall look out for both of you, and shall be sure to hear your laugh. Now, good-bye, both of you,” she added, giving a hand to each at the same time, and relinquishing Harry’s last. “No, don’t stir, either of you, I command. I know my way downstairs!” And with that she opened the big mahogany door and departed, apparently taking all the sunshine with her.

The fog and twilight seemed to combine in gloom. Heysham stirred up the coals into a ruddy blaze, and the two old friends dropped languidly into easy-chairs, lit pipes, puffed continuously, conversed intermittently, and became confidential as only two old friends under the influence of firelight and tobacco can become. In the course of this confidence, Caversham heard more about Miss Batiste than he had ever heard before. He was told that her father, who was an Englishman, and

her mother, who was French, were both dead, and that she had no relatives save an aunt near Calais; how that she expected to come into a little money eventually, but till that time had adopted the stage as a profession, where, in spite of her dislike of it, she had made a great success. Jack, who was dining out, after an hour's gossip departed, and as he was most carefully perfecting the arrangement of his white tie before his dressing-glass in Hanover Street, said to himself—

“Poor old Harry! He is tremendously gone on little Miss Me—there’s no doubt about that. ‘Oh, Mr. Porter, what shall I do?’” he sang, and then added gravely, “I don’t wonder at it!”

## CHAPTER VI.

## LOST IN THE FOG.

"I'VE a great mind not to take you children to-day," said Beryl. "I don't know whether it's going to rain or to snow ; it looks uncommonly like a fog. I think I'll drive up to Regent Street by myself, and come back as soon as I can. How will you amuse yourselves?" she added, as she approached her two pinafores sisters, who were sitting on the broad window-seat.

"Oh, Bee, it won't rain, I'm sure," said Flo ; "besides, they haven't sent home our new jackets——"

"Oh, Bee, you promised that you would get me that doll, and I must go and see about it," said Baby.

"Well, you must be very quick, and put on your warmest things. Ring the bell for Ray, and don't be long, for I shall start in a quarter of an hour."

And off bounded the children, and long before Beryl was ready, they were dressed. Ray must certainly have been very clever to get them so perfectly costumed in so short a period. Their print frocks, their pinafores, their russet shoes were gone ; and in their stead might be seen an entire change. They were dressed in short frocks of mouse-coloured velveteen, trimmed with otter skin ; they had *toques* of otter skin, with a tiny scarlet

feather ; this red was again repeated in the ribbons that tied up their long fair hair and in the clocks of their black stockings. The dazzling little collars found an echo in the white cuffs at their wrists, and in the snowy frills that peeped below their knees. Altogether, what with their rosy cheeks, their light hair, they looked as bonny a pair of little ladies as you might wish to 'meet. Beryl was proud of them, too, and always insisted upon their being neatly and well dressed. She was very particular, and would not allow them to go with her unless they were perfect in every detail.

"Now let's see how we all look," said Miss Cheyn, as she gave a twist to Baby's *toque* to get the feather on the proper side. Then she arranged Flo's skirt, and looked them both critically over. Beryl was a very martinet in such matters. At last she espied the fur torn on the edge of Flo's boot.

"Put up your foot, Flo !"

"Oh, it's all right, Bee."

"Put it up at once, Flo !"

And Flo had to rest her leg on the sofa, while her sister lamented over the unsewn strip of otter skin that edged the child's boot. The boot was taken off. Ray was sent for, a deal of sewing and repairing had to take place, and the consequence was they were much later in starting than they intended. This delay made all the difference in the events of the day. By the time they reached Piccadilly it looked very likely to be foggy ; but, on the other hand, there was an uncertainty about it, and it might clear up at any moment. A prettier group of sisters—nineteen, twelve, and ten—it would be difficult to discover. Beryl looked wonderfully young ; indeed, as she sat beside Flo in the carriage, you would

hardly think there was so much as seven years difference between them.

At the first shop they stopped at they paused a long while. There were all sorts of things to be bought, there were matters to be discussed, and a vast quantity of new garments were required for the children. When they came out it looked so like a real London fog coming on, that Miss Cheyn was for driving straight home at once. But her sisters begged and implored so much, that, against her own judgment, she gave in. They ordered the coachman to wait for them at Oxford Circus, as they wished to look in at the shop windows as they passed along. Indeed, shopping cannot be satisfactorily accomplished by driving from one shop to the other. Half the pleasure is to look and long for a thing in the window, and wonder whether you will have it or not. Probably the shop-windows of London, taking them all round, are the best exhibitions that we can boast of. Certainly a day's shopping in Regent Street or Bond Street is the finest treat you can possibly give to a fair country cousin.

It certainly gave unbounded delight to the children. They looked in at Swan and Edgar's, and spent a considerable time gazing upon the various pictures displayed in the windows of the Stereoscopic Company. Then they were a long time in choosing gloves at one shop; and Baby was mightily pleased at their eventually turning into another, and selecting a most wonderful doll, with a complete outfit, which Lady Ankerwyke had promised her for a birthday present. They then went to Duvelleroy's, as Beryl wanted to buy a fan for her aunt. Miss Cheyn was very difficult to please in such matters, so the selection took a considerable time. By

the time all this business was gone through, there was no doubt whatever about the fog. The lamps had been lighted in the shops and in the streets, and there seemed to be a probability of a real November darkness enveloping everything.

Beryl saw it was high time they found their carriage if they meant to get home safely, and she told the children they must make haste. The fog was getting so thick that it was difficult to see any one two yards in front of you, so she took Baby by one hand and Flo by the other. When they reached Oxford Circus they could not find the carriage, and Beryl then recollected that she had not told the coachman which side he was to wait, so not finding him the side she expected, she thought she would cross to the other. They went into Jay's to inquire if the carriage had been waiting there, and then recollected that the children wanted some more of those black silk stockings with red clocks. These had to be inquired about, and ordered specially for them. All this took a considerable time. When they emerged from Jay's it was almost like night, and Beryl took her two sisters and held them tightly by the hand, in case they might slip away and be lost in the fog.

It was no easy matter to cross the road. People were shouting, drivers were yelling, and lights were flashing in that deceptive manner which is always so confusing in a fog. People that were far off appeared to be close to you, and vehicles that were nearly running over you seemed to be at a considerable distance. The fog deadened sound as well as sight, and the crossing of such a thoroughfare as Regent Street was attended with no little danger. A polite policeman came to the rescue, who saw the three standing on the kerb, uncertain

whether they would wait till the fog cleared or make a run and risk it. He told the ladies when the road was clear, and Beryl, keeping tightly hold of both the children, was about to cross.

Just as she was going to make the attempt, her muff slipped, and she stooped down to recover it, and rushed across the road. In doing this she let go of Florry's hand. She thought the child was close beside her, but when she reached the other side she was nowhere to be found.

She seemed to have suddenly slipped away ; she melted in the mist ; she vanished in the fog, and was nowhere to be found.

"Where's Flo, Baby?" said Beryl, with no little anxiety.

"I thought she had hold of your hand, and then when you let go I fancied she ran on in front."

"There's Spinkle and the carriage, at any rate. Perhaps she is inside."

No ; the coachman, the carriage, and the plump horses were all right, but the child was nowhere to be seen. Spinkle had not seen anything of Miss Florence anywhere ; he had been waitin' there a matter of an hour and a half, but he had been scarcely able to see anything. Perhaps she had gone into a shop. They inquired at the shops in the neighbourhood, but no one had seen the child. They spoke to the polite policeman, but he had seen nothing of her since she crossed the road with the others. They waited and waited ; they called her anxiously by name whenever a child of her stature came looming through the fog ; but they got no response. They drove to all the shops they had visited to inquire whether she had returned to any of them, but without success.

Somewhere near the Stereoscopic Company, Beryl trod on something on the pavement, and stooping down and picking up what she had trodden on, found it was the little strip of otter skin off the top of her sister's boot. This was sufficient evidence that she had walked down Regent Street, instead of remaining to seek for her sister at Oxford Circus. She spoke to several policemen on the subject, and they promised to look after the matter and report. She knew Florry was a brave girl, and she thought it was just as likely as not that, when she missed them, she jumped into a cab and went home.

All things considered, Miss Cheyn thought the best thing to do was to drive straight back to Great Ormond Street. When they returned they found to their dismay that nothing whatever had been heard of Flo. The fog had not been so thick in Bloomsbury, and so Lady Ankerwyke had been by no means distressed at the long absence of her nieces. But when she heard of the darkness that reigned in Regent Street, and the sudden and unaccountable disappearance of Florry, she was very much disturbed. She was for sending immediately to all the police offices, and telegraphing a description of the missing maiden all over London.

Luckily Captain Halibourne called in to see his aunt before dinner, and when he heard a detailed account of what had taken place, he took a very serious view of the matter. He even made his aunt and Beryl look at the matter in a far graver light than they had hitherto done. He looked so serious about it that Baby, who had hitherto kept her spirits up pretty well, went upstairs with Ray and nearly cried her eyes out over the matter. Halibourne, who was engaged to dine with his most particular friends, the Clarrymores, said he should at once

telegraph an excuse, and that he should immediately go and use every effort in his power to obtain some tidings of the lost child.

Beryl was doubly anxious when she saw what a serious view Halibourne took of the matter. She had great faith in Flo's ability to take care of herself, and would not be a bit surprised at her driving up to the door any moment in a hansom cab. Miss Cheyn was alternately sorrowful and indignant on the matter.

"Poor Florry," she said, with tears in her eyes. "She will come back all right. Don't you think so, aunt?"

"Yes, my dear child, there's no doubt of it," replied her aunt, doubtfully.

"Silly child," added Bee, biting her lips, "running away from me in that heedless fashion! I declare she ought to have a good sound whipping, giving people all this anxiety and trouble! Yes; I should just like to—poor darling! She must come back, aunt." And then Miss Cheyn tried to rub her tears away with the back of her hand.

Halibourne had said that he would return directly he had some information, and dinner was put back half an hour. They waited till the half-hour had expired, and longer.

Dinner was at last ordered up, but it was a very melancholy affair. Both Lady Ankerwyke and her niece tried to persuade each other that the child would come back any moment. At every ring of the bell and at every knock at the door they listened anxiously, hoping for some tidings; but none came. And, as it always happens on such occasions, there were more knocks at the door and rings of the bell than usual. They augured ill from Halibourne's non-appearance, as they made sure that

they should see him the moment he had any news, or, at any rate, would receive a message from him.

Eight o'clock came. Nine o'clock, but still no tidings. Baby was sent off to bed, but she did not go to sleep, you may be sure. Every noise in the street, every stopping of a cab caused her to jump out of bed and see whether it was her sister returned, or if any one had brought any intelligence of her. The suspense was getting terrible for everybody, and Beryl said, if she did not hear by ten o'clock, she would certainly take a four-wheel cab and go, accompanied by Ray and Spinkle, in search of some intelligence.

## CHAPTER VII.

## A NEW PATIENT.

CAVERSHAM'S rooms in Hanover Street were pleasant enough. He occupied the first floor, and the rest of the house was occasionally let in apartments, during the London season. It belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Froat. The first had been butler, the second had been cook, at Lord Vauxhall's ; consequently, Master Jack was well looked after. Whenever he wished to give a little dinner, he found it much more economical and far better served at his own rooms than if he gave it at the Oleander or even at that most exclusive of clubs, the Periwig.

He had invited, on the Friday evening already alluded to, an old friend of his, Doctor Greyfinne, to have a quiet little dinner with him, and go to the play afterwards. Doctor Greyfinne, despite his frosted hair and his countless reminiscences of life and society at home and abroad, was one of the youngest men in London. He had a large practice, and was unsurpassable as a *raconteur*. He affected a cynical hardness, which only covered innumerable acts of benevolence and unostentatious charity, of which few people ever knew anything save the donor and the recipient. You rarely saw his name in a subscription list, and he was seldom present at a charity

dinner ; but, for all this, half his income was spent upon other people, and the greater part of his time was expended on those patients who could not afford to pay him a fee.

He had been a great friend of Caversham's father, and had known Jack himself ever since he was a small boy. He was particularly fond of the society of young people. Indeed, he had been heard to say, when, after the fashion of the day, somebody began to grumble about growing old, "All your own fault ; you associate with old people, and of course you catch their complaint." When he had an evening to spare there was nothing he liked better than a quiet dinner with Jack and a couple of hours at the play afterwards. On this especial evening Jack had taken stalls for the Trifle Theatre, and thither they proposed going to see the popular burlesque, *Prince Patissier*.

"I never say I will go to the play, after dining with you, Jack, but what I repent. Now, really, I don't feel much inclined to stir."

"Well, you must go to-night, doctor," cut in Jack ; "I saw Miss Batiste sitting to Heysham the other day, and told her we were going, and she sent her love to you !"

"Ah ! bless her. *What* a clever little lady she is ! She'll make a great hit some day, if she gets a chance. I hear that Heysham is very much *épripis* in that quarter. Well, he might do worse. There's a wondrous charm about her——"

"Yes, with all her high spirits and fun, there's a distinguished air of refinement about her. And I am very much afraid Master Harry is a gone coon in that direction."

"Don't blame him either," said the doctor, looking at his watch. "I again repeat, I wish we hadn't to turn out. I should like to stop here all the evening, and chat over old times. Really this claret is excellent," added the doctor, holding his glass up to the light.

"Glad you like it, doctor. It's some of the old tap from Wraysbrick. I don't think there is much of it left now."

"Excellent!" said the doctor. "They used to have some good old Thirty-four there, too. But you boys don't drink port nowadays."

"There's still some left, doctor; and the next time you go down, I'll take care you shall have a turn at it. Now, I'm not going to let you be late. Just a cup of coffee and a glass of curaoa, and a teeny cigar to smoke on the way down to the theatre, and off we go. The fog is getting worse and worse," added Caversham, as he went to the window and drew back the curtain.

"Now we'll be off," said the doctor, putting on his greatcoat. "If I sit down again I shall just light a big cigar and become a fixture for the evening."

"We'll come back again to-night—it will be all on your way home—and have a chat after the play," said Jack, when they had got their cigars in full blast, and were just turning out. "How this fog makes one's eyes smart! I declare I don't think it's safe to take a cab. If we don't take care we shall be run down before we can——"

He did not finish his sentence. There was a flash of lamps, a trampling of horses, a clattering of wheels, a shouting of drivers, the sharp ting-tang of a bicycle bell, and a shrill, childish scream. A young girl seemed to spring from the fog, appeared to come from under the wheels of a passing hansom, and fell almost at his feet.

There was a pulling up of cabs, a wrangling, and a crowd collected in that marvellous way that crowds will collect in London on the smallest provocation. The number of people who have nothing whatever to do at any hour of the day or night in London, and are always ready to assist at any passing spectacle, from a fight between newspaper boys to an old lady in a fit, is something astonishing. Caversham knelt down, and was about to raise the girl.

"Wait a minute, Jack," said the doctor; "let *me* see to this. Just keep the crowd off."

The crowd showed an inclination to jostle and close in, as if they did not see any reason why they should be cheated out of one of their legitimate free exhibitions.

"Keep back, please," said Jack. "Don't you see you're keeping all the air away from her?"

The people did not stir, and there was one youth who looked particularly aggressive.

"Now, my good people, stand back," said the doctor.

"Don't yer see 'tis the doctor?" Stand back," said the young ruffian, as he speedily cleared away half a dozen. "Can I do anything, doctor?"

"Yes, you can, Tipper," replied the doctor, recognizing an old patient in one of the most irreclaimable boys in London. "Keep the coast clear while I attend to this young lady."

And Tipper walked round and round, and glared at everybody, as much as to say, anybody who liked to come any closer had better try, that's all.

"Anything very serious, doctor?" said Jack. "Any bones broken?"

"Well, I can't say. I hope not. She seems to have fainted. She may be a trifle stunned. I hope she did

not hit her head on the kerb as she fell. She ought not to be moved far. It would be a risk to take her even as far as Charing Cross Hospital. It would be a greater risk to take her to Portman Square, or she should go to my house. I really hardly know what——”

“My dear doctor, take her in here. She can have my room, and Mrs. Froat can attend to her. Nothing better—here we are on the spot. So let us run as little risk as possible.”

“Oh dear, oh dear!—no theatre for me to-night,” said the doctor, turning on his cynical tap. “Isn’t it odd how womankind, even a small specimen like this, puts aside all our projects in a moment? Now be very careful. Mind how you go.”

And the doctor took the child in his arms and carried her upstairs as tenderly as a baby—Jack Caversham going before to clear the way, and Tipper staying behind to do battle with the gaping multitude that gathered around the door.

He put the child on the sofa, and carefully examined to see if any bones were broken. He sent Jack off to the Nurses’ Co-operation in New Cavendish Street, with his compliments to Miss Hicks, begging her to send a skilful nurse round at once, and at the same time gave him a prescription to take to the chemist’s and have it made up to bring back with him. Meanwhile the doctor and Mrs. Froat undressed the child and put her to bed. The sleeves of the mouse-coloured velveteen were ruthlessly cut, and a similar fate befell one of the smart silk stockings with scarlet clocks. The doctor kept on grumbling to himself as he was carefully seeing what extent of damage the child had met with.

“Pulse better. Yes, much better. No *Prince Patissier*

for me to-night ! Just like my luck. Shoulder all right. Shan't see the play, after all. Won't do to leave her at present. No pool for me at the Grampus to-night. Ha ! that hurt her. Awkward twist of the ankle. And I ought to be looking at the enchanting Miss Batiste, instead of being in attendance on this tiny, fair-haired witch. Am I never to have a holiday ? That's right—a little more colour in her cheeks. I wish Jack would come back. Very good of him. But I fear his happy home is ruined for a time. Must be kept quiet. Wonder who she belongs to. Fancy I've seen her face before, or some one like her. Just like my luck. Is not womankind always in the way of everything ? ”

“ Well, doctor, what news ? Any better ? ” said Jack, as he came rushing in with the draught.

“ S-s-sh ! Don't make a noise ! This is not the Grampus smoking-room. Do be quiet. What a time you've been. Give me the bottle. ”

The child opened her blue-grey eyes and looked at them dreamily.

“ Where am I ? Where's Bee—where's Baby—where's aunt ? Have I lost them all in the fog ? ”

“ They're all right, my child, ” said the doctor, in the quietest voice. “ Now just drink this and go to sleep, and you'll see them all after a bit. ”

She drank her draught ; she looked at him with a sad, pleading expression in her eyes, as if she would ask much and would say a great deal if she had power and strength. She trusted the voice of the good doctor, and she turned round and closed her eyes, and in a few minutes dropped off to sleep.

“ Now, ” said Greyfinne, “ she'll be all right for a time. You'd better take a turn out and see where you're going to

roost to-night. Go down to the *Oleander*, and see if you can get any of your friends to put you up, or you may go to my house if you like. I shall stop till the nurse comes, at any rate. We shall get on better if you get out of the way for a time."

"All right, doctor. I'll just take a turn down to the club and see what's going on, and then come back for further orders."

All this time Beryl and her aunt were in the greatest state of anxiety. They had had one special messenger from Halibourne to say that he had no definite report to send at present, but he had received information that he thought would put him on the right track. How hopeless Beryl thought his message was! but she had no idea how utterly hopeless Halibourne judged it to be. At nine o'clock they had this despatch, and Beryl put on her walking dress, and had sent for a four-wheel cab, and was resolved to go somewhere in search of some kind of information at ten.

Halibourne was at his wits' end. He had been to all the police-stations, and had inquired everywhere. As a last resource, he thought he would pop into the *Oleander*, and see the latest editions of the evening papers, in the faint hope that he might obtain some clue. He was hunting through these when who should turn in but Caversham.

"How are you, Caversham? Been to the theatre? Where's Greyfinne—upstairs playing pool?"

And then Caversham began to explain why they had not been to the play; how they were just starting; all about the accident, the pretty child with light hair laid up at his rooms, when Halibourne suddenly cut in—

"What, fresh colour? Mouse-coloured velveteen?"

Otter trimmings? Otter cap? Black-stockings-red-clocks——”

“Yes, yes,” said Caversham, wondering.

“Florry Cheyn!” rejoined Halibourne, excitedly.  
“Thank Heaven! Come along.”

And before he knew what he was doing, Halibourne had seized him by the arm, led him into the lobby, shaken him into his greatcoat, and put him into a hansom cab.

“Great Ormond Street as quick as you can!” he shouted to the man through the trap.

Just as Beryl was about to start she saw the hansom, with its flashing lights, come rattling up the street. She turned pale when she saw Halibourne and Caversham jump out without Flo, and fancied the very worst.

“Good news!” shouted Charlie, directly he saw her. And they both went in and made the very best of the matter to Lady Ankerwyke.

And that night Beryl, along with the skilful nurse Miss Hicks had provided, kept watch and ward over Florry in Caversham’s rooms, while Jack found temporary accommodation at Limmer’s, hard by.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## BEE IMPROVES THE SHINING HOUR.

FLORRY'S accident proved to be a more serious affair than anybody imagined it would be. Doctor Greyfinne's opinion the following morning was anything but encouraging. She had sustained, he said, what is known in the profession as a "Pott's fracture," which would prevent her walking for some weeks to come. She had been very much frightened ; she had caught cold, and there was a slightly feverish tendency. The doctor said on no account should she be moved, or he would not answer for the consequences. Jack Caversham went round to Great Ormond Street with Beryl in the morning, and begged Lady Ankerwyke would make any use she pleased of his rooms, which he placed at her disposal during her niece's illness.

Lady Ankerwyke was greatly taken with Jack. His hearty manner and his handsome face had quite won her confidence, and had entirely dissipated the prejudice she had formed against "Beryl's Bayard," as the unknown young man had been christened in the family.

"Really, Mr. Caversham," said Lady Ankerwyke, "we are deeply indebted to you. First you rescue Beryl from what she calls the savage tribes of St. Giles's ; then you

take care of my horses and see them safely stabled ; and, finally, you take charge of poor Florry—and, if you have not been the means of saving her life, you have probably prevented her from having a long and serious illness. I really cannot thank you enough,” added the stately old lady, with her voice trembling, and tears in her eyes.

“Pray don’t mention it, Lady Ankerwyke. I was fortunate enough—by an extraordinary piece of luck that does not often fall to my lot—to be on the spot when and where I could be of some little use ; and if I can do anything further, pray do not hesitate to command me. The doctor tells me that it may probably be a case of some duration, though not of danger, and I beg you will make any use you please of my rooms. Mrs. Froat is a kind, motherly sort of woman ; she is very good at nursing. I believe there is plenty of room in the house just now, so pray do not scruple to send any one there you like.”

The end of it was that the rest of the house was engaged by Lady Ankerwyke. Ray was sent thither to assist in nursing ; Beryl took up her abode there for a time ; and none of the family, but Baby and her aunt, were left in the house in Great Ormond Street. Jack went to reside at Long’s, and an extraordinary change came over the rooms in Hanover Street. Florry’s case, though it could scarcely be called one of absolute danger, undoubtedly required the greatest care and the most careful nursing. It was many days before she could leave her bed.

When she first awoke and recovered sufficiently in order to take notice of things, she wondered were she was. She could not understand that row of beautifully polished shoes, that looked so much too big for anybody ;

and she wondered what was the use of their having wooden feet wedged inside them. What did that row of coats mean, and why was the looking-glass half obscured with cards and notes? There was a gigantic bath with which she was not familiar, and a collection of the roughest towels that made you feel rasped all over, even to look at them. Where were the white hangings of her own bed gone to, and why had she that gay shawl-pattern coverlet over her? How did those odd little statuettes get on the mantelpiece, and what had they done with her Christmas pictures from *The Graphic* and the *Illustrated London News*? Why had they been removed, and why was there hung in their stead the picture of a little girl so very scantily clothed that Florry feared she would catch cold? She did not know the flower-faced clock on the mantelpiece, nor had it the familiar tick of the one in Great Ormond Street. Where had all the dark panelling gone to, and what was the meaning of this light, lively wall paper?

How long had she been asleep? It must be very late. She wondered she had not been called. What did they do yesterday? Where was she yesterday? Yesterday was a long, long time ago. If she knew what had been done yesterday, or where yesterday was, she would be happy. She would try and think. She tried very hard, but her thoughts would not range themselves in order. As fast as she established one fact it melted into something else. She was weary of this everlasting building up of things that immediately fell down. It made her feel so tired, so sad, so tearful. She would ask for Bee, for Baby, for Aunt Ankerwyke, or for Ray; but it pained her too much to even think which she would ask for.

She wondered where they all were, and why they left her in this strange room, with the strange fireplace, with the new pictures, and that mysterious row of brightly polished shoes, with their wooden feet. She attempted to turn in her bed, when she felt an excruciating pain in her foot, that made her cry out. She had a vision of Beryl hastily pulling back a curtain and rushing in. She fancied a tender, sweet-voiced nurse, whom she did not know, was supporting her head. Then she had an idea that a kindly, cheerful doctor, whom she fancied she had seen many, many years ago—she did not know whether she had seen him or dreamed about him—came in and looked at her. Every one spoke in whispers, and every one seemed a long way off. And then she dropped off again to slumber.

It was much against Lady Ankerwyke's ideas that her niece should go and nurse her sister at Mr. Caversham's rooms. But what was to be done? Lady Ankerwyke could not stir out herself, for her cold had recently become worse than ever. There was no one to superintend matters but Beryl. She had Sister Mona as head nurse; there was Mrs. Froat, the best cook in the world; there was Doctor Greyfinne in constant attendance; and Caversham himself had retired from his home altogether. Everything was as proper as proper could be; but still there was something about it that the aunt did not quite like, and she was anxious to get Florry home again as soon as possible. She hinted as much to the doctor.

"Mustn't think of moving that child yet, Lady Ankerwyke," said he, with a twinkle in his eye, "or I won't answer for the consequences. Why, the infant is in clover! I always knew Mrs. Froat was a good cook—

can't think why that cantankerous old Vauxhall parted with her—but I never knew how strong she could come out in the invalid line. Beef-tea—splendid! Light pudding—marvellous! Jelly—superb! Mutton chops—poems, simply poems, Lady Ankerwyke! I've done my part now. There is nothing left but to pull the child through with good nursing and good cooking. Both she has at Hanover Street; and I positively forbid her being moved at present. I had luncheon there the other day with Miss Cheyn. There was a *vol-au-vent* which was a perfect symphony; there was a Maraschino jelly that was a culinary sonnet. Why doesn't Froat shoot himself, or get a divorce? and I'll marry Mrs. Froat, and live happily for ever afterwards. Seriously, my dear Lady Ankerwyke, you must not think of moving Florry until I give her marching orders."

So nothing more was said on the subject, though Miss Cheyn's aunt did not like the chance of her niece meeting Jack Caversham too frequently. As a matter of fact, Jack was at his old rooms very little. He had given them up with great pleasure for an especial purpose, and only returned there occasionally for a few minutes when he was obliged to. He appreciated the delicacy of the situation, and acted accordingly.

Beryl was much amused at the idea of her being housed in the very rooms of her "Bayard with the blonde mustache." She had a good deal of time to herself; and while Sister Mona kept watch over Florry in the adjoining room, she amused herself by perusing Edmund Yates's "Broken to Harness," which she found among the number of excellent novels with which Caversham's room was stocked. She took great delight in going through the collection of pictures, which were so

numerous that it was difficult to say what the original tint of the walls may have been. Over the mantelpiece was a perfect "gallery of girls" that had, at one time or another, broken Mr. Jack Caversham's heart into very small pieces—so small that each of them were supposed to have become possessed of a portion of it, and that now he had not an atom left for any one else.

Beryl took a peculiar delight of an evening, when her charge had gone off comfortably to sleep, in going through this gallery and giving a little history of her own to each damsel. She would attempt to read the character of that dark-eyed girl with a fan; she would ascribe weakness to the fair-haired damsel with cast-down eyes; and had composed quite a novelette in her mind with regard to a bright, Leslie-faced girl, in an oval frame. There was one striking picture of a graceful damsel in apparently some fancy costume, charmingly drawn in silver-point by Sainton, that forcibly impressed her. Some of these pictures had autographs beneath them, and Miss Cheyn would try to build up their characters from their handwriting. It was astonishing the interest that she took in this gallery altogether.

There were other pictures that she took pleasure in besides the portraits. One she never discovered till she had been there a week, by reason of its hanging in a recess, and being somewhat in the shade. One night she came suddenly upon it, and she said aloud—

"Wraysbrick? Why, that *is* Wraysbrick. I wonder what Mr. Caversham knows of Wraysbrick?"

There undoubtedly was Wraysbrick, with its quaint chimneys, its high-pitched roof, its curious ancient windows, and its grand old elms. It was many years

since Beryl had been there, but she now seemed to recollect every stone of it. The next day it so happened Caversham called for some books, and he was announced in as ceremonious a fashion as he would be if calling on Lady Ankerwyke at her own house. He came laden with fruit and flowers for Florry, and he stopped for some little while, making inquiries after the child, and chatting on general topics.

He only intended to remain five minutes ; but he found Beryl more than usually agreeable, and he sat down and stayed for an hour. The pair became so very friendly and confidential that Lady Ankerwyke would have been very anxious could she have seen them. Luckily, our rightful guardians do not see everything, or the world would be a much more anxious and unbearable place than it is. Despite Doctor Greyfinne and Mrs. Froat, it is to be feared, had Beryl's aunt seen how very amicable these two young people were, Miss Florry would have been fetched home without further delay.

It was during this call that Miss Cheyn told him all about the theatricals that they intended to have in Great Ormond Street, but which had been put off in consequence of Flo's illness, but that now the child was getting on so nicely would shortly take place. She also informed him what a difficulty they were in, as Herbert Themeter, who was to have played the Marquis de Frontignac in *A Wonderful Woman*, was suddenly ordered abroad, and they did not know who they could possibly get to fill his place.

This matter was talked over for some time, and the end of it was that Jack Caversham—who had played the part before—consented to undertake it on the condition that he was not compelled to shave off his mustachios.

When Lady Ankerwyke came to hear of this she was very much distressed. She had serious thoughts of breaking up the party altogether and sending Beryl away on a visit. This, however, could not be done, as the invitations, after having been once rescinded, had again been sent out, and most of the actors were already perfect in their parts.

It was at the conclusion of this long call that Beryl's eyes happened to light on the photograph of Wraysbrick just as Caversham was leaving, and she said—

“Do you know Wraysbrick, Mr. Caversham?”

“Yes, very well indeed, Miss Cheyn. Have you ever been there?”

“Yes, but not for years. That picture has recalled some of my earliest reminiscences.”

“Yes?”

“Yes; indeed it has. I went there with my aunt, Mrs. Clayvill—Colonel Clayvill's widow. I was with her when my father was in India. I was a little tiny child of six. I have not seen the spot since, but the photograph recalls every line of the place to my imagination. Have you visited the house lately?”

“I was staying there only two months ago.”

“Who has it now? Any one nice?”

“Well, I fancy so,” replied Jack, laughing. “But then I'm scarcely an impartial judge, for it happens to be my own mother!”

“Really?” said Beryl, with much surprise.

“And were you,” added Jack, passing his hand across his forehead, “the little child who was staying there when I came home from Eton one summer that they called Bonny Bee?”

“I believe that was my pet name——”

"Then the mystery is at last solved," said Caversham, as he rose to say good-bye.

And Beryl Cheyn pondered the matter in her mind after he had departed, and wondered what on earth he could mean.

## CHAPTER IX.

## COMEDY AND TRAGEDY.

LONG before it was time for the curtain to go up at Lady Ankerwyke's, the large room where the theatricals were to take place was crammed, and when the overture had commenced every one had settled down into his place, and there was "not even standing room left in the gallery," as Kit Crickleum said, who was busily engaged in flirting with the prettiest girl in the room on one side, and retailing the most recent scandal to a deaf dowager on the other.

He was obliged to leave off suddenly in the midst of one of his best stories, and in his confusion he put the young lady's lace-bordered handkerchief, which he had just picked up, into his pocket, and dropped his eyeglass with a click, as a shrill-sounding bell announced the rising of the curtain and the commencement of the comedietta — *A Wonderful Woman*. The audience applauded tremendously, for they were quite taken aback at the pretty picture set before them. Heysham had done a good deal for this. Not only had he painted some of the scenery, but he had carefully set the whole scene, introduced real flowers, saw that everything was properly grouped, and that the background was in har-

mony with the figures. In short, he had made Madame Bertrand's boudoir as perfect as could be on so limited a stage. A charming little drawing-room orchestra had been arranged by Dayne, who presided at the piano. Indeed, Caversham had pressed all his friends into the service for this special occasion.

Kate Clarrymore, as Hortense, looked very charming. The figured satin dress, the point-lace, and the powdered wig suited her admirably. Both she and Charlie Hali-bourne, who played Rodolphe, were somewhat nervous at first; but when Beryl Cheyn, as Cecile, came running in exclaiming "Oh, good gracious!" a new life seemed to be infused into the whole thing, and the little scene between her and her aunt went tremendously. The next point in the performance was when Caversham entered as Frontignac. He looked the character to perfection. His puce silk suit, his muslin cravat, his point-lace ruffles, his powder and bag, his sword and *chapeau-bras*, and every minute detail of his costume, had been most carefully considered. The only thing that was a drawback was the blonde mustache, which nobody had been able to make him shave off. He seemed perfectly at home as he rattled on, "What does all this mean? A letter with no signature; a house with no one at home; a gentleman who is no relation; and a servant who knows nothing. Well, a man who is thoroughly ruined can afford to take things easily, so here I'll stay till some explanation comes to me."

All seemed to improve as they went along; not a point was missed; and Kit Crickleum's high little chuckle was frequently to be heard, indicating to the dull portion of the audience "where the laugh came in." Every one was anxiously awaiting the scene between Frontignac and

Cecile, and wondered how it would be got through. Jack was evidently a little bit nervous, and faltered somewhat as he said, "It's very easy to say 'calm yourself!' but I'm lost in a fog. How shall I employ my last few single moments? Once married, I shall no longer be allowed to say— *Here's* a pretty little girl coming!"

Then Beryl, as Cecile, enters crying, and saying, "I will *not* go to school again; I'm determined." The half-pouting, half-tearful talk of Cecile was admirably rendered, and the points were thoroughly appreciated by her audience. It may be remembered that Cecile says she is very miserable, and does not care who knows it; and then the following dialogue ensues:—

*Jack.* "Miserable, and so young?"

*Beryl.* "Yes, sir."

To this came a burst of applause.

*Jack.* "And so pretty?"

*Beryl.* "Yes, sir."

Here everybody became enthusiastic, and Kit Crickleum dropped his eyeglass and shouted "Brava—brava!" And when Caversham waited for the applause to die away, and said, "Poor little candid child, can I help you?" the whole room seemed to have suddenly thawed, and applauded vociferously. But people who knew the piece were aware that the great scene was yet to come, and they watched the following dialogue with the keenest interest:—

*Jack.* "Who is Rodolphe?"

*Beryl.* "Oh, such a nice young man, sir!"

*Jack.* "I dare say; and has your aunt any affection for him?"

*Beryl.* "I don't know, but *I* have."

*Jack.* "Well, if the character of this young man should prove good——"

*Beryl.* "Don't say if, sir ; he's everything he ought to be."

*Jack.* "No doubt ; however, subject to that, your uncle gives his consent."

*Beryl.* "Oh, how kind of you ! You're something like an uncle, and I'm sure I shall love you very much."

Then she advanced as if to embrace him. Kit Crickleum was delighted, and an old young lady from Clapham looked very much horrified. Then Jack says, in his airiest manner, "Don't check yourself, my dear—don't check yourself," and Beryl replied, "Well, then, I won't," and then she ought to have embraced him and rushed off. Instead of that she advanced a step, and then said, "Oh ! good gracious, there's somebody there," and rushed off on the wrong side, and upset something or somebody in the wing that came down with a tremendous crash.

"Sell for Caversham," said Kit, in an undertone, and people shrugged their shoulders. Caversham began to pull his mustachios nervously, and it was about a minute before the piece proceeded. The rest of the act went somewhat flatly. Jack seemed to have lost a good deal of his spirit, and it required all the most careful playing on the part of Halibourne and the others to pull the thing together. Between the acts, whilst the audience were talking over the performance, the actors were disputing in the extemporized green-room.

Good-natured Kate Clarrymore had lost her temper for once, and had told Beryl if she did not choose to play the character properly she had better have left it alone. Beryl retorted that she would throw up the part alto-

gether. Caversham was growling in an undertone to Halibourne, and it was only by the exercise of the most crafty diplomacy on the part of the latter that the second act was performed at all. However, it went fairly enough, for Beryl and Jack did not come much together in it. Just at its conclusion she had to say to him—

“You’re not going to make any more shoes, are you?”

And Jack replied, “If you don’t hold your tongue, my last act of cobbling shall be to sew your mouth up!”

He said this with such energy and bitterness that one would fancy he would have liked to perform the operation in earnest on the spot. Caversham, however, was destined to endure a good deal of vexation that night. His services were not required in the afterpiece, so, along with Kate Clarrymore and others, he came round and sat among the audience and received their congratulations.

The next piece was *The Little Rebel*. Dolly Lamer played Stephen Poppincourt; Maud Feyton, Mrs. Wingrove; Beryl Cheyn, Laura; and Captain Halibourne, Arthur Ormeston. The whole thing was enacted with great spirit. As the high-spirited girl, relegated to short frocks by her juvenile mama, Beryl was admirable. She seemed determined that nothing should prevent her going into the whole character heart and soul; and the way in which she frisked about the stage with Lamer and made him jump and skip as the imbecile old Poppincourt, was a thing to be remembered. Halibourne was simply perfect in his part. He had rehearsed it with Beryl over and over again—the consequence was that there was not a tone or a gesture out of place, and it was the most finished bit of acting of the evening.

When he had to say to Beryl, "Laura, you love me, then?" and she replies, "Better than my biggest doll—better than lemon-drops or burnt almonds—better than all the world!" every one laughed, and Caversham smiled grimly. But when she gave him her hand and allowed him to smother it with kisses, Jack looked very wrath indeed, and inwardly vowed that private theatricals were about the very worst form of amusement ever invented. But he could not help admitting to himself that Beryl acted the character to perfection.

With what spirit did she deliver the tag: "I should have still been treated like a child, and kept at school, if I hadn't had the spirit to rebel. Yes, I'm not ashamed to confess it—I rebelled. Ah! it was very wrong." And then she glanced at Caversham with a mixed look of penitence and fun. "Rebellion is dreadful when it breaks out in short frocks; and though I gained a husband by it, I promise never to give him cause after marriage to call me 'The Little Rebel.'"

Caversham was delighted, in spite of his ill-humour, and he tore the flower out of his button-hole and flung it at her. Kit Crickleum and many other men followed his example, and not a few of the ladies' bouquets went in the same direction.

Despite his wrathful state of mind, Caversham somehow or another found himself next to Miss Cheyn at supper. He complimented her on her performance, and spoke so much in earnest, and was so enthusiastic, that Beryl was quite pleased. She said—

"It's very good of you to say so, I'm sure, Mr. Caversham. You know I felt more at home in the second piece. I was not myself in the comedy, and I don't think I knew what I was doing——"

Caversham smiled.

"I quite lost all idea of myself in the farce. Beryl Cheyn was gone, and Laura Wingrove reigned in her stead, and——"

"And was so much in love with Arthur Ormeston," interpolated Jack.

"Yes ; oh yes !" answered Beryl, as her eyes sparkled, and she blushed. "I loved him so much ; better than my biggest doll—better than lemon-drops or burnt almonds."

"Better than all the world?" asked Jack.

"I'm afraid I spoiled your scene in the comedy, Mr. Caversham," said the young lady, affecting not to hear his question. "I'm very sorry ; I couldn't help it. It wasn't my fault, I think——"

"You made the exit on the wrong side, Miss Cheyn, which threw us into a little confusion," replied Caversham, with assumed indifference. "If I had only known what your intentions were——"

"Oh, they oughtn't to have kissing in comedies at all."

"Or farces?" asked Jack, mischievously.

"How well the farce *was* played," cut in Kit Crickleum. "How thoroughly it was rehearsed. Well, you know, it couldn't be otherwise," he added to Jack, in an undertone. "Halibourne and Miss Cheyn have played together in amateur theatricals ever since they were babies. All that love-making, too, was so natural ; and no wonder."

"Why?" asked Caversham.

"Why," continued Kit, "because they've been lovers ever since they were *so* high. And now, I believe, there's no doubt about it, they're engaged. And a very good thing it will be. Miss Cheyn, they say, hasn't a penny

to speak of; but Halibourne will be well enough off when his uncle Sir Charles drops—old boy can't last long, though they say gouty people live for ever—and, at any rate, Lady Ankerwyke's money won't be divided. And Captain and Mrs. Halibourne will have what you would call a very good start, and not an indifferent prospect for young people. Well, that reminds me, don't you know, of the tale they are telling about the Duke of Tattlebury. Tattlebury, not half a bad sort of fellow, don't you know, was staying down in Snipeshire. Well, his man came in one morning; he had been valet to the Marquis de Galantine, don't you know——”

“But about Halibourne and Miss Cheyn. When were they engaged?” asked Jack.

“I wish you wouldn't stop a good story, Caversham. I was just coming to the point. I don't know when. But they are engaged, I know, for certain, and I should think would be married this year. At any rate, I'm engaged to Miss Cheyn for the first waltz after supper.”

And Jack Caversham, like a foolish fellow, left the house directly supper was concluded, and went home and growled. He could see through the whole thing now. He could perceive the reason why Beryl had marred the principal scene in the comedy; he could understand her unaccountable behaviour, and could see exactly that she wished to give him a hint that their relationship could never be closer than it was at present. How blind he had been, with Halibourne so constantly before his eyes, not to see this before! However, it was not too late to attempt to remedy his misfortune. He had been due at Mentone for some time, and on the morrow he would pack his portmanteau and be off.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE CASTLE THAT JACK BUILT.

IT was only a day or two before the fatal theatricals at Lady Ankerwyke's that the temporary occupation of Caversham's rooms by Miss Cheyn and her sister had been surrendered. Jack had latterly called a great deal oftener at his own rooms than was good for the peace of mind of either Beryl Cheyn or himself.

Of course there were all sorts of excuses. There was the old acquaintance of childhood at Wraysbrick to be talked over. Then Jack felt it incumbent on him to call frequently to inquire after Flo. He brought her fruit and flowers 'from Covent Garden (the white camellias that Beryl wore in *A Wonderful Woman* were Jack's present, but nobody knew anything about this: had Lady Ankerwyke dreamed of such a thing she would have been horrified), and when the child was getting better he came with books and newspapers. Of course, when the theatricals were once started Mr. Caversham was always wanting to see Miss Cheyn on one point or another. One day he wished to consult her as to costume; another upon her idea on the reading of a certain line. Sometimes he was compelled to call to ask some question as to the scenery—which he had undertaken to

superintend—at others he was obliged to look in as he had quite forgotten what hour was fixed for the next rehearsal.

All this troubled Lady Ankerwyke immensely. Once get the theatricals over, she would put an end to all this, she had determined. Charlie Halibourne must certainly come forward, Beryl would be a good and obedient niece, and they would marry and live happily for ever afterwards. There was some doubt, however, in the good old lady's mind whether everything could be carried out in the way she wished : she began to be conscious that it would not be quite so easy to achieve her pet project.

She saw now that young people who had been so much thrown together during childhood, and who had since established such a confidential cousinship, might possibly be disinclined to carry matters further. She noticed that Halibourne called less frequently at Great Ormond Street than he used to. She heard of his being frequently at the Clarrymores', and had once or twice heard his name coupled with Kate's. She also had a suspicion that Beryl would not, in a matter of this kind, be "a good and obedient niece," unless her views were in harmony with those of her aunt. She had known Beryl from a baby, and was well aware how obstinate she could be. From eight to fifteen there was probably never known a more warm-hearted, hot-tempered girl than Beryl Cheyn. Her mama, her governesses, and her schoolmistresses had the greatest difficulty in controlling her. Indeed, there was scarcely anybody who could manage her.

After fifteen she changed very much, and it was only when she felt very strongly indeed upon some subject that she occasionally flashed forth in the old style. Lady

Ankerwyke, therefore, thought it would be unwise to say anything to her niece on the subject, nor did she feel inclined to hint anything to Captain Halibourne. She thought it was best to bide her time, and see how matters would arrange themselves.

Jack Caversham, who had certainly built a little castle for himself, was sorely disappointed at finding it proved to be of such an aerial character. He was not a man easily led away. He had been popular enough in his time, but he never had the notion that every woman was in love with him. Men who have that idea are not infrequently those that women care least about. He could see that his society was not disagreeable to Miss Cheyn; he noticed that she brightened when he called; he knew by intuition that there was a warm sympathy between them; and he thought it was by no means unlikely that the sympathy might deepen as time went on.

Jack was by no means ignorant of the sex. Having lived the life he had, at the age of eight and twenty experience should have taught him wisdom. He fancied that he could read a woman's character; he flattered himself that he knew whom he could trust—that he had learned the art of distinguishing the false and the true. If Mr. Jack had achieved this knowledge, he would have accomplished that which students of double his age have never arrived at. He would have been an expert in that art in which grey-haired professors still acknowledge themselves to be but explorers in an unknown country.

Alas and alas! Who can understand the ways of girlhood? Who can read aright the ways of womankind? They sacrifice their own lifelong happiness for a moment of pique; they will endure years of misery for the want

of the breaking of some trifling rule of etiquette. Much-enduring and long-suffering, patient and amiable as they may be under reverses, when, for their own sake, they ought to take immediate and decisive action—to flout Mrs. Grundy for a few days, they fail terribly. And their own weakness brings its terrible punishment.

Was Beryl of this class? No matter! Jack was very indignant over the whole affair. Not, perhaps, so indignant as sorrowful. If he could have caught the Paris mail the night of the theatricals, and gone straight off, and travelled as hard as he could till he reached Mentone, he would no doubt have felt considerably better by this time. Or if he had stopped, and danced the dances that Miss Cheyn had promised him, it would not only have been more polite, but it would, at any rate, have led to a clearer understanding. Instead of doing this, on the strength of what Kit Crickleum says—which after all may be the purest gossip, with no foundation in fact—he loses his temper, bounces out of the house, and comes home and growls. He not only behaves like a boor, but acts like a fool. If, as has before been hinted, he had at once taken a long journey, it would have refreshed him bodily and mentally. He would have come back convinced that he had been a fool; he would have viewed matters in a reasonable light, and tried to act like a sensible man.

But he remained at home, and growled and grizzled in the very worst atmosphere for his complaint. It may be recollected that it was only a few days before all these shocking events happened that Beryl and Flo and Sister Mona had cleared out, and given up the rooms to their legitimate proprietor. That is to say, the recent occupants had departed, but they had left many of their

belongings behind them. Jack had not intended to return for a week till the place was thoroughly set to rights, but his sudden determination to start for the south of France brought him back unexpectedly. The rooms still bore such reminiscences that they became peculiarly annoying to him in his present state of mind.

He found Austin Dobson's "Vignettes in Rhyme," with the paper-knife between the pages of that charming poem "Tu Quoque." He recollected reading it to Beryl one day, and how delighted she was with it. He remembered her placing the paper-knife in it, and saying, "I must read that again, Mr. Caversham!" He could recall her exact expression, what a sparkle there was in her eye, and he could see in imagination her exquisite little dimpled hand grasping the ebony paper-cutter. Then his eyes glanced at the photograph of Wraysbrick, and he knew every word she said about the picture, the remarks she made on Miss Batiste's portrait, and what questions she asked about the sketch of Cecil Stillmere. He called to mind that she had promised him a photograph of herself, and he thought sadly that he would never receive this now.

All this was very foolish—it was unmanly, it was contemptible. When one sees it written in black and white it appears absolutely childish and silly. But how many of us have gone through the same thing and have not behaved a whit better, and how many more of us will go through the same thing again and behave very much worse?

All through the house there were reminders of his departed guests. Outside on the landing was a gigantic dress-basket that had not yet been fetched away. There were a pair of Flo's boots standing on his bedroom

mantelpiece, and a lot of Beryl's music on the top of his piano. He opened the piano and carelessly struck a few chords : he found a little grey glove tucked behind the music-desk. He took it up and smoothed it out : he knew well enough to whom *that* belonged.

There was a sharp knock at his door.

"Oh, come in!" shouted Caversham, somewhat irritably.

And in came the pleasant face of Doctor Greyfinne.

"Why, what *is* the matter, Master Jack?"

"Oh, I'm all right, doctor," answered Jack, wearily.

"All right? Don't tell me! I suppose I don't know my business, do I? Up late last night, I see. Couldn't go to sleep when you went to bed. Got up early—felt worse. No breakfast to speak of. You scorned Mrs. Froat's omelette, and sent her grilled bacon untasted away. You have not shaved. You have had a B. and S. since breakfast. Your room is in a muddle. Your mind is disorganized. And," he added, pulling back the *portière*, and gazing into the next room, "you are packing up a portmanteau, and you meditate a sudden flight. Mr. John Caversham, sir, I'm ashamed of you!"

"My dear doctor," replied Caversham, laughing in spite of himself, "I'm all right—just a little down, you know. One can't be always screwed up to concert pitch!"

"Concert pitch!—indeed, no. You cannot touch concert pitch without being defiled. People are always trying to keep up to concert pitch in the present day, consequently they are always breaking down. If it were not for fools and concert pitch I might put up the shutters at once. It isn't a question of concert pitch with

you, sir ; you're altogether out of tune. Instead of being a good, honest Broadwood, you have become the hack piano of boarding-school misses. I suspect some miss or misses have been playing on your heart-strings to a pretty tune. I see you one day a bold, healthy, hearty Englishman—an English *man*, sir. I find you another, a love-sick boy, sir—a boy, sir, I repeat—toying with the cast-off glove of a feather-brained girl.”

Jack started, and coloured, for he had been quite unconscious that he had been caressing and smoothing out that little grey glove all the time the doctor had been talking.

“John Caversham, you are a fool ; but not such a fool that you are not ashamed of your folly. You see that glove—it is a fit emblem of the occasion that I wish to improve. That glove, sir, is crumpled—it is soiled, it is rent, it is useless.”

“No, doctor—only been worn once,” cut in Jack, as he held the glove up and laughed.

“No matter, sir ! For the sake of a hard fact, and the plain, unvarnished truth, I decline to be deprived of my illustration. We will say, for the sake of argument, that that glove is crumpled, soiled, rent, and useless. It was once smooth, spotless, brilliant, and necessary to the existence of its owner. Then its owner cherished it and fondled it, and made much of it. But when evil times came upon it, when it was no longer necessary to her well-being, then she tired of it, she flung it away ! How true all this is ! A girl will fling you aside with just as little ceremony as she would a worn glove, and she will take up with a new lover with less thought than she would bestow on buying a dozen pairs of gloves. Oh, listen unto the words of wisdom that fall from the lips of

George Greyfinne, philosopher and medicine-man, at your service."

"My dear doctor, how you run on! This glove is one that, I suppose, Miss Beryl Cheyn left behind, and I found it only just now inside the piano. I am grateful for your sermon, but I fail to see the point of your discourse. Have a glass of sherry?—or shall Mrs. Froat give you some luncheon?"

"I will neither eat nor drink till I have prescribed for you. 'Thou art in a parlous state, O shepherd.' I fear, like Bo-peep of old, your sheep have gone astray. Beryl Cheyn! Wh-h-ew! Never do a kind action, Jack, my boy. It was all my fault. I ought to have sent that child to the Charing Cross hospital, and risked everything. I knew no good would come of it. To think that pretty, grey-eyed child could have worked all this mischief! And then she is the cause of introducing a prettier grey-eyed sister, who brings misery and desolation into the 'house that Jack built.' This is the reward for doing good. Never go out of your way to oblige any one. Keep straight on along the path you have chosen for yourself—turn aside neither to the right hand nor the left. If a weaker man than you be in the way, run over him; if a sickly fellow-creature delays you with asking alms, button up your pockets and kick him into the gutter. Show no mercy to womankind, put not faith in even the youngest of them, for they will deceive you under the guise of childlike innocence whenever and wherever they have the chance——"

"Stay and have luncheon," interrupted Jack, laughing.

"My dear Jack, I will, for I have something serious to say unto you. Mrs. Froat is the only woman I ever loved, and she, unfortunately, is 'married to another,

and never will be mine.' And she is the only woman to be trusted—with a *mayonnaise*!"

And over luncheon the doctor gave a great deal more sage advice, though he could scarcely persuade his young friend that he had built his castle on a very unsubstantial foundation.

## CHAPTER XI.

## LADY ANKERWYKE'S TROUBLES.

IT was a great grief to Flo and Baby that neither of them were allowed to be present at the performance of *A Wonderful Woman*. They would both have liked to ~~have seen~~ it, and if they had been allowed to give an imitation of the skirt dance between the acts, their joy would have known no bounds. But directly Florry was better, and able to walk with a little assistance, the moment she could be moved without any risk, she was ordered off to Dover.

"Must have a change," said the kind medical attendant. "Change of scene, change of air, change of food. Bath-chair in the sunshine when the wind is not too cold, sea-water to bathe the ankle every morning. Go to bed early; let the exercise be gradually increased every day. When you get better go to the swimming bath and take lessons in swimming, and if you take care, my little lass, you'll soon be quite as strong as your sister. When you come to town again I'll show you how to fence—the best exercise in the world for girls."

Flo pleaded hard to be allowed to stay to see the theatricals, but the doctor was inexorable. So was Lady Ankerwyke, so was Beryl. Baby was sent off along with

her ; and perhaps the wholesome idea of keeping these damsels absolute children had as much to do with the decision as anything else. Lady Ankerwyke followed directly her party was over ; but Beryl remained at Great Ormond Street to see after some business for her aunt, promising to join them as soon as she could. After leaving town, Lady Ankerwyke addressed the following letter to Captain Halibourne—

“ Marine Parade, Dover.

“ MY DEAR CHARLES,

“When you left us the other evening, you said you were going down to Dullington for a few days, so you will have heard nothing of our movements ; and it will probably surprise you to receive a letter from me with the above address. You knew, I believe, that Flo and Baby had been sent down here for change. We shall probably be here for some weeks. Beryl remains in town for awhile, as she promised to look after some matters for me, but I trust she will join us before long. I fear the poor child will feel dull in my absence, though her old friend Maud Feyton has promised to stay with her for a few days if she can possibly manage it. I wish you would kindly look in when you have an opportunity, and cheer her up. *She is always so glad to see you.* And she has often said *there are no friends like old friends.* Have you had a large party down at Dullington, and have you lost your heart to Miss Perooner, the great heiress, whom I hear is in the neighbourhood ? Or have one of the everlasting Miss Ulverstones—they ought to have been married before you left school—succeeded in hooking you ? I think it is time, my dear Charles, that you thought of marriage. I am getting

older every day, and I should like to see you settled, and come and see you in your own house, before I get too old to enjoy your society and that of your charming wife. I am sure she will be charming; for the good taste of the Halibournes is proverbial. *It is quite time you turned your attention to some one*; for, between you and me, I counted *six grey hairs* on the left temple of Captain Halibourne's head the other day. But I suppose an old woman ought not to venture to give advice on such matters. But you must forgive your aunt, Charles, for the love she bears you. I trust you found Sir Charles better. Pray give him my kindest regards, and

“Believe me to be,

“Your affectionate aunt,

“GILIAN ANKERWYKE.

“*Do not forget to call on Beryl.* Flo and Baby send lots of love to ‘Uncle Charlie,’ as they call you.

“I send this to the Oleander, as I do not know whether you have returned to town or not.”

This letter remained at the Oleander Club for some time; for it so happened that another note that Halibourne received, which had been despatched direct to Dullington, caused him to go straight through London without calling for his letters. The note alluded to bore the same date as Lady Ankerwyke's, and ran as follows:—

“East Cliff, Dover.

“MY DEAR CAPTAIN HALIBOURNE,

“It is an odd time to be in Dover, is it not? But I know of no place so delightful to be in before it becomes crowded with trippers and excursionists. Besides, we have had a sad mishap with water-pipes in

Portland Place. The drawing-room has been flooded, and other rooms rendered uninhabitable. Mr. Clarrymore is obliged to be at the House just now, so we have managed to arrange a couple of rooms for him, and have given up the rest of the place to the workmen. I was so afraid you might call in our absence *and wonder where we had got to*. Kate told me you were gone to Dullington, though I don't know how she found it out. I hope Sir Charles is better. He is most certainly a wonderful man for his age and the constant illness he has suffered. Kate is very well, though I think she has been looking somewhat pale and out of spirits lately. Have you seen anything of the charming Miss Cheyn lately? Kate says she thinks she is one of the prettiest girls she ever saw. If Lady Ankerwyke is staying at Dullington, pray give my kindest regards. Her theatricals at Great Ormond Street were some of the most perfect things of the kind I ever saw. Should any chance bring you to Dover at this odd time of year, do not fail to give us a call, and cheer up two lonely women, whom a husband and a father deserts for the good of his country. Kate has her horses down here, and has been out once or twice with the Lamers.

“Believe me, my dear Captain Halibourne, to be

“Yours sincerely,

“CATHERINE CLARRYMORE.

“Kate directs this, as I was not quite sure of your address.”

When Halibourne saw Miss Clarrymore's handwriting on the outside of the envelope he was very much delighted, but his countenance fell when he found the letter was from her mother. However, it had the effect of changing

his plans altogether. He had not had a very lively time down at Dullington. Sir Charles had had more gout than usual. Both the Ulverstones pounced upon Charlie, and quarrelled violently over him after they got to their bedroom at night. Miss Perooner had endeavoured to establish a flirtation with him. He was altogether getting very much bored, and caught gleefully at any excuse that gave him the opportunity of returning to town.

He was very glad indeed to plead urgent business, to tell his man to pack up as quickly as possible, and, after a very rapid drive to the station, he just managed to catch the eleven o'clock express. When he arrived in London he was only just able, by means of a very fast hansom from King's Cross, to save the Dover train at Victoria.

Beryl remained in town much longer than she expected. The new housekeeper whom she had to interview did not appear. She was expected every hour, so Miss Cheyn could not leave town even for a day or two. Lady Ankerwyke and her two little nieces got on together famously. Doctor Greyfinne was quite right—the cure was being completed in a most marvellous fashion by change of air, of scene, and of food. Florry went out four times in a Bath-chair, but her bright eye and her rosy, healthy face made people look round and wonder whether the child was playing a practical joke or not.

Her ankle was now getting so strong that she could walk very fairly with a little assistance, and she hobbled along with an ebony, silver-mounted crutch stick that had belonged to Caversham, and which he had given her just before she went away. She was very proud of this stick, though it may be hinted that her aunt scarcely regarded it with high favour. Lady Ankerwyke was con-

tinually suggesting it should be laid aside, or proposing that an umbrella would do equally well ; but Florry would not hear of it. However, it was not long before she became as strong and as active as her sister.

Lady Ankerwyke used every morning, before the children's early dinner, to take a turn up and down the Esplanade in her Bath-chair. Sometimes she would have the hood up, and sit reading a novel in the sunshine. Flo and Baby were often with her, and sometimes bowling their hoops along the asphalte. The two pretty children, with their short petticoats and long hair, were a good deal noticed, and made not a few acquaintances, greatly to her ladyship's annoyance.

One morning, when it happened to be unusually warm and sunny, her ladyship was sitting in her chair, well sheltered from the breeze, and was reading George Augustus Sala's wonderful story, "The Ghost in the Double Room." There is a good deal about Dover, you may recollect, in this most entertaining recital, and Lady Ankerwyke had a keen appreciation of humour. She was thoroughly enjoying the description of Tilly Standfast, Lieutenant Lamb, Mrs. Van Plank of Sandwich, ague-stricken Alfred Starling, and Responsible Bonsor ; she was shaking with laughter over all the uproariously comic things that went on at Snargatestone Villa, when she happened to look up.

She was startled to see the children in animated conversation with some strangers, and to see a tall, soldierly man kissing Baby and patting Flo on the back.

"I must go and tell those children to come home at once," said Lady Ankerwyke, closing her book suddenly.

She was just telling her man to start in their direction,

when she saw, to her horror, the four all join hands and rapidly approach where she was sitting.

Her ladyship, who was very short-sighted, put up her double glass, focussed it on the quartette, and saw, to her surprise, that her nieces' companions were none other than Captain Charles Halibourne and Miss Kate Clarrymore !

## CHAPTER XII.

## IN BERYL'S BOUDOIR.

BERYL CHEYN felt rather dull after the theatricals were over and all the family had gone away. The last few weeks had been such a time of excitement, beginning with her romantic introduction to Jack Caversham, prolonged through Flo's illness, and finally culminating in the performance of *A Wonderful Woman*.

Now that all these things were gone and past she felt everything flat and insipid. She was in that big house all alone : she missed her aunt's society, for Lady Ankerwyke was one of the most amusing old ladies you could wish to meet with, although she had really nothing of the old lady about her. It was, after all, though, somewhat of a relief for Beryl to have got rid of her for a time, for she had certainly thrown out hints lately that Miss Cheyn could hardly mistake. She was desirous of keeping friendly with her aunt ; but if the affair between Charlie Halibourne and herself was likely to be forced, it was certain that Beryl would speak her mind very distinctly on the subject.

She missed Flo and Baby terribly, for her very existence was bound up in those children. Her devotion to them and the time she spent over them was something

extraordinary. She not only superintended their education, but looked after their amusements, attended to their physical as well as their mental welfare, devised and designed new dresses for them. The residence at Caversham's rooms, the many callers, the visits of Doctor Greyfinne, her anxiety about her invalid sister, and, of late, the frequent calls of Mr. Jack himself, had kept Beryl in a whirl of excitement, so that the quiet old house in Great Ormond Street seemed to be very dull indeed.

The whole affair had been a very pretty little drama, from its commencement on Boxing Night. Somehow or another the last act was not satisfactory. The beginning was so bright and pleasant, but the end was weak and undecided. The force and brilliancy of the first volume of Beryl's romance seemed to have faded in some unaccountable manner before she arrived at the third. Whether she had read her third volume, or whether her last act had been performed, she could hardly say. All she knew was that she felt very weary, that she was not a little sad, and exhibited a petulance that, had it been shown by Flo or Baby, would have received instant punishment.

She had callers in plenty after the party. They seemed never tired of sounding her praises. She was quite weary of the compliments they paid her with regard to her rendering of Cecile, and the enthusiasm with which they spoke of her impersonation of Laura Wingrove. The first she was certain had been a somewhat mediocre performance, but the second she was conscious had been played nearly as well as it possibly could be. She had been somewhat nettled by the *contretemps* of the early part of the evening, and she threw all her power, with a little spice of mischief and spite, into her impersonation of the "Little

Rebel." Every one seemed to have enjoyed the evening so much that it was a wonder to Beryl herself that she had not enjoyed it more. Indeed, though everything had gone off so well, to her it appeared to be unsatisfactory. Unsatisfactory was about the only word that would adequately describe her feelings on the subject.

Everybody had called except the two people she especially wished to see—namely, Charlie Halibourne and Mr. Caversham. The former she fancied might have gone to Dullington, but she knew he would not be there long; and the latter, she had been assured by that ubiquitous and well-informed young gentleman, Mr. Kit Crickleum, was still in town. She particularly wanted to see Charlie, as she wished to find out how matters were going on between Miss Kate Clarrymore and himself. She thought she could see how things were drifting, but she knew Charlie had been one of the most fickle of his sex from his youth up, and she fancied the match would hardly meet with the approval of Lady Ankerwyke.

She also wanted to see him to hear if he knew anything about Caversham, or had heard anything concerning his movements. She did not know exactly what she wanted to say or to know. But she wished to find some one who would talk to her about the subject that was uppermost in her mind, without any questions or suggestions on her part. Now, if Mr. Caversham had any sisters in town, how nice it would be to go and call upon them. It is astonishing if a girl takes an interest in a man, or a man takes an interest in a girl, how very charming all relations become—for a time. How heavy fathers become "benevolent," stingy mothers "worthy people," ancient unmarried sisters "charming girls with no nonsense about them," hulking, riotous brothers "good fellows with marvellous

animal spirits," and most unbearable uncles and aunts  
"the very best people in the world."

Miss Cheyn was, after all, in no good humour with Mr. Caversham. She knew she had not behaved well to him in the evening, but she had reserved four of the very best dances for his evening for him, and he had not come to claim them. Harry never told any one, but she sat out all those hours in fear of being tired: her eyes anxiously sought the door from time to time to see if her "Bayard with a bow" was coming back again, and she was naturally somewhat piqued and disappointed at his non-appearance. He was evidently scared by a little of her wishy-williness, and chose to take silence for his part, and not have everything his own way. As Miss Cheyn could claim those dances when Dolly Hamersford, Dolly, and Kit Crickleum were dying for them! It was positively disgraceful. And not to come and say so much to her about herself! It was positively rude! And to neglect even to leave a card afterwards! It was positively horrible! No, she had quite done with Mr. John Caversham, thank you, and would think no more about him.

It is quite likely you could not have seen Beryl at the

[illegible]

at the same time as that sweet, healthy, dimpled young beauty, Beryl Cheyn. What sums some of those poor old women would have given for her complexion, and how surprised they would have been to hear that her only cosmetics were plenty of exercise, early hours, and cold water. Maud said she would come to breakfast and spend a long day, as these two friends had a deal to talk over. Breakfast, therefore, was laid in the boudoir, and Bunnidge had received strict orders that Miss Cheyn was not at home to any one else.

"Bonnie Bee"—as she used to be called in her days of short-petticoatism—most assuredly made a dainty picture on this occasion. She was only just out of her cold bath, her complexion was fresh and bright, her dimples were provokingly playful, and there was a tender colour on her cheek such as you sometimes see in the inside of an apple-blossom. Her pretty chesnut hair was hanging uncoiffed over her well-shapen shoulders, and she had on a coquettish turquoise-hued tea-gown. This was partly open in front, and displayed a snowy-broidered petticoat, and from time to time, as she carelessly swung, a little foot with a high instep, daintily shod in pale blue kid. Yes, if Jack had seen Beryl as she sat and swung in a rocking-chair, and alternately pouted and smiled over "Archie Lovell" while waiting for her friend, he would most assuredly have repented that his absurd impetuosity had robbed him of the four dances already alluded to.

"Come in," said Beryl, in answer to a knock at the door.

And in came Maud Feyton.

"My dear Beryl, what is the matter?"

"Nothing the matter, my dear Maud."

"Nothing? Why, you said 'Come to breakfast, as I

have something important to tell you.' I thought Lady Ankerwyke was ill, or you were going to elope with Captain Halibourne, or you had had another adventure with another blonde mustache, or you——"

"Now, do sit down, Maud! Tea or coffee? How's Lucy? How's Mrs. Feyton? Is Loo behaving worse than usual? I haven't seen you since our play; it was good of you to take that small part, and you did play it so well."

"Well, you know, I enjoyed it immensely. I like a small part, because it doesn't 'give you much trouble, and you have all the fun of the rehearsals and have most of it at the performance. I never saw anything more perfect than your Laura Wingrove. I declare when you came on in the second dress—in the short frock and pinafore—I thought it was Florry. And so did many others. Every detail of the dress was so complete. I made a sketch of it, which, if you will give me a sitting, I will make into a picture. And talking of pictures, you will have to give me a sitting for another, Miss Beryl. I am going to paint this room just as it is, with yourself in the blue tea-gown, swinging in the rocking-chair just as I saw you when I came in. It would be perfect! I love these contrasts of the old and the new."

"You are an enthusiast, Maud—a real enthusiast—to make such fuss about what Charlie Halibourne is rude enough to call my 'baby face.' If I'm ever engaged, I'll get you to paint my portrait and give it to my *fiancé*."

"Well, then, I'd better begin immediately, for you'll have but little time to give me sittings; and as I'm a somewhat slow painter, you'll probably be an old married woman before it is completed, and then you won't care about having it."

"Nonsense, Maud! I shall not be married for a long time—if ever. I really have no time for it. If you had two big babies to look after, like I have, you would find not even time to make a pen-and-ink sketch. Indeed, I don't see any possibility of my having a husband till Flo is comfortably married and settled. She really will be very pretty—I fancy she is already a coquette—and will want a good deal of looking after. You cannot trust children altogether to governesses or nurses. So you see my work is pretty well cut out. I have to look after these girls' lessons, I have to superintend their games and their amusements. To see that they take proper exercise, and that they read books of the right sort. I supervise their dresses—have made some, and designed most. Those fur-trimmed velveteens you admired so much were my own idea——"

"They are charming," said Maud.

"They cannot get on without me," continued Beryl. "They look to me in everything. I reward them when they are good, and whip them when they are naughty——"

"My dear Beryl, I don't think they would fear *your* whippings much."

"Perhaps not; but I mention the fact to show what absolute power I have over these big babies, and that they are more like my own children than my half-sisters. You will see I have not much chance of getting married. A man could not—even were he Brigham Young—marry three Miss Cheyns at once. Beryl Cheyn in a temper—as you know, my dear Maud—is difficult for any man to manage. If, in addition to this, there was the chance of Florry Cheyn in a passion, or Baby Cheyn in the sulks, he would be driven pretty well out of his mind!"

Maud laughed.

"Ah! you know what I am," continued Miss Cheyn; "but you've no idea what Flo and Baby can be when they're naughty. I must look after both of them till they're married. Flo ought to marry in seven years' time, and Baby in nine. Say in ten years they will both be disposed of. *Then* I shall be able to look out for myself. And at the respectable age of eight and twenty or thirty I shall try and entrap a bishop into matrimony. Do you know, Maud, I think I should make such an excellent Mrs. Proudie——"

"Really, Bee, you have drawn a most charming picture of what you, as a bishop's wife, would call self-abnegation. At nineteen you cannot be expected to play the part of the old woman who lived in her shoe. I am sure *that* shoe," she added, glancing at the blue kid slipper that Beryl was balancing on her toe, "would not afford extensive accommodation. You're little more than a child yourself, and it is absurd to think you can have the trouble and care of two big girls thrust upon you."

"It is not a trouble nor a care; it is not thrust upon me. I undertake it willingly. I like it. But it gives me no time to think of matrimony. Besides, I have no property, as you have often heard me say before. I am portionless. I have naught—in point of fact, I am a 'naughty girl,'" she added, with a laugh, "so no one will marry me for money."

"Very likely not, but you'll be married for love, which is ever so much better. My dear Beryl, I see through all your philosophy, and enjoy hearing you talk. But I know all about it."

"All about what?" asked Miss Cheyn, starting up with some alarm on her countenance.

"And I come to offer my congratulations."

"On what?"

"On the betrothal of Miss Beryl Cheyn to Captain Charles Halibourne. I wish you every happiness, and shall expect to be a bridesmaid."

Beryl rippled back her gleaming locks, placed her hand to her head, and took a long tress in her mouth and bit it absently. She had a scared look about her, and her friend saw that there was evidently something wrong—that she had gone beyond the boundary of joking.

"How? Where? When did you hear it, Maud?" she said seriously.

"The night of your party," replied Miss Feyton. "I heard Mr. Crickleum tell Mr. Caversham that he knew it to be a fact; that he could give the date when the wedding was to take place. I heard Mr. Caversham ask him again. And he assured him that the particulars he had given were substantially true."

Beryl covered her face with her hands, and rocked slowly to and fro. Jack Caversham was not, after all, piqued at her behaviour in the comedy, for she recollected how pleasantly he had chatted to her at supper-time. It was this bit of gossip that had driven him off, that had made him leave those especial dances unclaimed, that had caused him to neglect calling, and had marred the *dénouement* of what promised to be a very pleasant little life-comedy. And Jack Caversham? Where was he now? And Charlie Halibourne—the only man who could enlighten her on the subject and give her advice—had gone she knew not whither.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## DOCTOR GREYFINNE'S PRESCRIPTION.

DOCTOR GREYFINNE, of course, affected to sneer at Jack's complaint. He said he was a silly fellow; that he had brought all this trouble upon himself by doing a kind action. He told him he had been a fool in the first instance to go out of his way to rescue Miss Cheyn from the Saint Giles's ruffians, and he had been a still greater fool to give shelter to poor little Florry ; but he had been greatest fool of all to return to his rooms while they were still in the occupation of the enemy, and to flutter round the flame until he had his wings burnt.

And there was no doubt about it—Jack's wings were very badly burnt indeed. The doctor had seen him and had prescribed for him when he had been suffering from hurts of a similar nature of a more trifling description, and had been always able to make a safe and certain cure. The doctor had seen Caversham through the sundry attacks of love that a young man is as sure to have as he is to be obliged to endure the whooping-cough and measles of infancy. Jack had gone through so much of this kind of thing that he had begun to think himself invulnerable, to fancy he was case-hardened, to give himself the airs of a cynical old bachelor, and to

talk of the things that might have been ; but the truth was, Jack had never been hardly hit after all. He had sighed over Cecil, he had broken his heart over Dora, he had written verses to Mignonne, but he had recovered before another London season came round.

This time it was a very different thing. If you have the measles when you are young it does not much matter. If you have them when you are verging on thirty it is a very different affair. It is the same with love—at least as far as the sterner sex is concerned. Probably a woman of thirty does not love with any great amount of passion ; there is no such unselfish and pure love as that of a girl of nineteen. At nineteen a girl loves with all her heart, with all her soul, and with all her strength. At nineteen a boy is a fool, and does not know the real meaning of love.

At eight and twenty it is a far different matter ; he has seen something of the world ; he has had some experience of womankind ; and he can, in some wise, discriminate between the good and the bad. A youth of nineteen cannot appreciate the devotion of a girl, even if he could obtain it. And a girl of nineteen will rarely conceive any affection for a youth of her own age. "If young people *will* marry," said Doctor Greyfinne, "they had much better leave it alone altogether ; but if they *must* marry, let the girl be nineteen—not more—and the man be not over thirty. Then there may be some chance of happiness. The man might, in some cases, be older, but the girl should never be a day over the age I have mentioned. I have seen changes in damsels from eighteen to one and twenty that have been really melancholy to witness." The doctor was not a little concerned when he saw how badly Caversham was hit, and he made

many inquiries on the subject, but he could not see exactly how he could help his friend. He gave him a good talking to on the day he called, but it did not appear to have much effect.

He was somewhat startled by receiving the following letter from Jack :—

“ Hanover Street.

“MY DEAR DOCTOR,

“I am off. I am sick of the sight of these rooms and all the associations they recall. I go by the Paris mail to-night. I am sorry I shall be unable to see you before I go, but I have a lot of things to see to. I shall work my way down to Mentone, and will let you have my address. If you have any news, I shall be glad to hear from you. I wish we could have dined together before I leave, but I find that is impossible.

“Ever yours most truly,

“JACK CAVERSHAM.”

Greyfinne saw from this note that matters were getting serious. He saw that Caversham was just in a state to brook no interference ; that any attempt to stop him leaving town at this present moment was likely to prove a failure. He also knew that the best thing that the young man could do for the prosperity of his suit was to stop in town and see what might turn up. So the crafty, kind-hearted doctor sat down and indited the following most diplomatic note :—

“ Portman Square.

“MY DEAR JACK,

“Why are you off in such a hurry? If you must go, you must, and there's an end of it. But I cannot

have you running away without saying good-bye. I have a little parcel I want you to be kind enough to take to Mentone for Lady Yolkton, if it is not troubling you too much. My patients are behaving very well just now, which is an odd thing, seeing so many of them are women, and I shall be free this evening. So bring your portmanteau along with you ; come in your travelling clothes, and dine with me at the Grampus at six. I will promise to give you a better dinner and a better bottle of claret than you will get before you return to England again. So mind, I shall count upon seeing you.

“Yours very truly,

“GEORGE GREYFINNE.”

This note settled the business. Jack thought it would be a pleasant thing to have a chat with the doctor before he left. His old friend, he knew, would come to see him off at Charing Cross Station, and he felt assured that a good dinner at the Grampus Club was no bad foundation to a rough Channel passage.

At six o'clock precisely Jack presented himself at the Grampus, deposited his portmanteau in the hall, and was shown into the Stranger's Room. Here he was joined by the doctor in a full suit of tweeds. Caversham's face brightened.

“What, are you going with me, doctor?” said he. “Are you going to take Lady Yolkton's parcel yourself, after all?”

“No, no, my boy. No such luck ! But I like to fancy I'm going somewhere. I shall go and see you off. And then perhaps I shall go a little round of London amusements all by myself. It is such a treat to play at going away. I shall keep the delusion up all through dinner,

and it will last until I see your train steam out of the station. I mustn't forget that parcel of Lady Yolkton's, or there will be a row," added Greyfinne, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

The dinner was perfect. Although the Grampus was a somewhat dull and ponderous club, the *chef* was a prize, and its cellar one of the choicest in London. The doctor was glad to see that his young friend's appetite was excellent, and that he fully appreciated the good things set before him—that he partook in moderation of the dry Giesler, that he neither sighed nor gulped down his liquor after the custom of your ordinary love-sick boy.

At the next table to them Crockett Gargoyle, the architect, was giving a dinner to an eminent Q.C. and the member for Budleigh Salterton. The conversation was very lively at Gargoyle's table, and the talk was a good deal about the House of Commons.

"One of the best speeches last night," said the member for Budleigh Salterton, "was Clarrymore's. It was short, pithy, and to the point. There was not a word too much or a word too little."

"He's a very clever man," replied Gargoyle. "He's one of the very few with his head screwed on the right way. By the way, you heard what a flood he had with the bursting of water-pipes at his house in Portland Place. I expect that will put him about sadly."

"Losing his daughter will put him about more," I fancy, said the eminent Q.C.

"How's that?" said Gargoyle.

"Going to be married to Captain Halibourne. That handsome young fellow. Lady Ankerwyke's nephew. So I hear," replied the eminent Q.C.

Not a word of this was lost on the doctor or Jack. But the doctor noticed that his young friend did not show any disposition to hurry over his dinner ; nor was he continually consulting his watch, as he had been at the commencement of the meal. Greyfinne, however, saw that time was kept, and at seven o'clock precisely a bottle of the famous claret was placed on the table. By this time Jack had become somewhat more talkative ; he had begun to what people call "open his mind"—as if one's mind were an oyster—and to seriously discuss his chances of winning Miss Cheyn.

"You heard what they said just now?" said the doctor. "It may be true and it may not. Halibourne has money of his own and expectations—that is to say, certainties—from his uncle and from his aunt, Lady Ankerwyke. Lady Ankerwyke wishes him to marry Beryl, and my belief is that if he asks her she will probably have him. I generally find that money turns the scale, however good or exemplary a woman may be. Indeed, I know it for a fact.

'If gold thou hast, fond youth,  
'Twill speed thy suing ;  
But if thy purse be empty,  
Come not to me a-wooing.'

"But, doctor, you don't think Miss Cheyn would——"

"I think any woman would, Jack. If it's a question between Halibourne and money or Caversham and love, Halibourne wins the day. I only argue from facts that have come before my eyes."

"But you don't mean to tell me that——"

"I mean to tell you that you will do no good by going away. That if you run off you leave the field clear for Halibourne under any circumstances. And——"

"Eight o'clock, sir," said the waiter. "Cab at the door, and portmanteau put up."

"Then we must go," said the doctor, gravely, "or we shall miss the train."

"But do you think that if——"

"If you stop and have another bottle of that excellent claret, and subsequently smoke a cigar, you may possibly win. If you go you will endure all the miseries of a night Channel passage, and will most certainly lose. Which is it to be?"

"Doctor, I yield to good advice. I stay."

"Another bottle of claret. Remove the portmanteau, and send the cab away," said the doctor to the servant ; and turning to Jack, he said, "I am certainly the most unfortunate man in the world. Lady Yolkton will never get that parcel now. It was of the utmost importance. But there, it's just like my luck !"

Jack and his friend had further talk, and concocted more plots over their cigars ; and just as Mrs. Froat was going to bed, about half-past twelve, she was greatly surprised at the return of Mr. Caversham and his portmanteau.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## A LOST CHANCE.

SAID Doctor Greyfinne to Jack Caversham on the night of their memorable dinner at the Grampus Club, "It is impossible to say how matters will turn out, my boy. You must stay in town and watch it." And so Caversham took the doctor's advice and remained in town for the sole purpose of "watching it." It appeared to him very much like Mr. Micawber waiting for something to turn up; yet it was some comfort to be on the spot in case he was wanted. He had read in the *Morning Post* that Lady Ankerwyke had left town for Dover. Halibourne had disappeared, so he naturally concluded that he had gone with her. He did not put much faith in the story of the captain's engagement to Miss Clarrymore, for it had been absolutely contradicted by some one who said he ought to know, if any one ought.

He was one day in a shop in Bond Street buying some gloves, when he heard a voice he thought he knew, saying—

"No, really this won't do. They're not quite the right tint; they should be pearly grey, with six buttons, just like the last Miss Cheyn had. If you will get them by the day after to-morrow at the latest, I shall be very glad."

He turned round, and whom should he see but Maud Feyton.

"Good morning, Miss Feyton. Why, I've not seen you since the play at Lady Ankerwyke's!"

"*What*, Mr. Caversham? How are you? *No* one has seen you since that evening. Everybody has been inquiring where you have fled to. Popular report Number One says that the Marquis de Frontignac went straight off that evening and threw himself over Waterloo Bridge. Popular report Number Two says that Captain Halibourne and Mr. Caversham went across the water to fight a duel about the beautiful Madame de Bertrand. Popular report Number Three says they were both shot through the heart. But I can now contradict that. At any rate, neither of them has been seen since that night. I danced the best galop of the evening with Captain Halibourne, and nobody has seen him since. Say, oh say, Mr. Caversham, you have not shot Captain Halibourne, have you?"

"You have seen him since I have, Miss Feyton," replied Jack, laughing. "I have no doubt he's wounded. Very hard hit indeed! The night of our play I left directly after supper——"

"I know you did, and very rude it was, without saying good-bye to any of us——"

"And Halibourne was, I suppose, dancing till four o'clock in the morning? I say I suppose, for I have seen nothing of him since. Have you heard anything of Lady Ankerwyke or Miss Cheyn? I suppose they are still both at Dover. I had a charming little letter from Flo the other day. I'm so glad to hear the child is getting all right again."

It was a pretty little note of thanks Florry sent him ;

he noticed that not a word throughout was said of Beryl. In his suspicious and irritable frame of mind, he naturally came to the conclusion that this was intentional, and it made him very sad. Whereas the real fact was that Beryl was in London, so the child never thought of mentioning her.

"Lady Ankerwyke is at Dover, but Beryl is in Great Ormond Street. Indeed, she has never left town at all. I've been staying with her. I came to spend 'a long day' a week ago, and have been there ever since. She would have been with me this morning, but she was obliged to stay at home to see a new housekeeper for Lady Ankerwyke. I am afraid I shall be rather late for luncheon as it is," added Miss Feyton, glancing at her watch.

Caversham walked out with her, forgetting his change and the pair of gloves he had just bought. Outside he found the ancient carriage that he drove home that memorable night, and Spinkle, who touched his hat, and appeared to be very glad to see him once more. Jack saw Miss Feyton to the carriage, and carried her parcel. Maud had a great mind to ask him to drive back to luncheon, but she thought he had behaved so foolishly that he deserved to be punished, and she was not quite certain what Beryl would say to the whole affair. When Caversham said, with a grave face—

"You'll give my kind regards to Miss Cheyn, please, and convey my apologies—I——"

"Oh, you must come and make your own peace, Mr. Caversham; don't drag *me* into the matter. I have enough on my shoulders with my wild little sister Loo. We have tea every afternoon at five, so if you wish to conclude an armistice you had better come and join our

Conference. You can't expect *me* to be the bearer of your flag of truce," added Miss Feyton, as she drove off, laughing.

Jack was well pleased, but at the same time rather vexed, to think what a lot of time he had lost. What a fool he had been for not calling before! He recollected one night when he had mooned down Great Ormond Street, simply for the foolish purpose of gazing on the outside of the mansion where once resided the girl he loved, he had noticed the house looked well lighted, as if it were inhabited. What a donkey he had been for not calling and asking if the family had returned! He had stopped in town for the purpose of "watching it," and he seemed to have let every favourable opportunity slip out of his grasp.

Over luncheon Maud and Beryl had a rare talk over the unexpected discovery of Mr. Caversham. Maud was very cruel in the description she gave of the miserable appearance of Jack.

"He's a changed man, I declare, my dear Beryl. He has aged wonderfully in the last few weeks. And those light mustachios droop—positively droop, my dear. He's a sad wreck!" she added, laughing.

"I wonder whether he'll come?" said Beryl.

"Come! Of course he will. I shouldn't be surprised if he looked in this afternoon!"

There was a thundering knock at the door.

"There he is!" said Maud.

It happened to be the postman, who had let the knocker slip out of his hand, and had given over and above the professional rat-tat. But Miss Feyton could see how Beryl Cheyn's colour came and went, how she interlaced her fingers and bent them back, and listened attentively till they were quite sure there was no caller.

"Ah! he cometh not, she said; I am aweary, and aweary, and I would that I were dead!" said Maud, laughingly.

"Don't be absurd, Maud. Do *try* and be a little serious, for here are despatches from head-quarters," she added, as Bunnidge brought in letters on a tray.

"Matters are getting complicated. I hope now, Miss Feyton, you'll see you're not so right as you fancied. And there will be no occasion to think about your bridesmaid's dress at present. Listen to this, and terrible!"

" 'Marine Parade, Dover.

" 'MY DEAR BERYL,

" 'I am very sorry you should have had to wait in town for that tiresome housekeeper. I really think you had better not wait any longer, though Mrs. Wivelsfield tells me she is a treasure. I think treasures may be purchased too dearly sometimes. It must be very dull for you in that gloomy old house. I am glad Maud Feyton has taken compassion on you, and I have no doubt she has cheered you up.' (I think she has—just a little bit!) 'I am very sorry Charles has not called'—(So am I)—'as under his escort you might have gone to various entertainments. But the fact is, he has not been in town at all.' (Now for an explanation of the mystery!) 'He is down here.' (Oh, the bad boy, what does he mean by that?) 'So is Mrs. Clarrymore; *so is Miss Kate Clarrymore.*' (Ha! ha! Master Charlie!) 'It is curious.' (Very odd.) 'He came straight through from Dullington. Never called for his letters. So he did not get mine at the Oleander, or he would, of course, have remained in town to look after you.' (Oh, would he?)

‘It is most extraordinary his being here at this time of year ; I cannot understand it.’ (Oh, my dear auntie ! And a woman of your vast experience and acute perception, too !) ‘He had much better have remained at Dullington and endeavoured to be of some use to Sir Charles. I really do not think he is doing his duty to one who will eventually leave him most of his property. Dullington Park, my dear Beryl, is not to be’ (—to be sneezed at ? Oh, Lady Ankerwyke, this is slang ! Oh, I beg her ladyship’s pardon) ‘sneered at, nor is a snug little mansion in Brook Street.’ (Does your Beryl ever sneer at such good things, auntie ?) ‘I have a terrible idea that Charles is somewhat infatuated with Miss Clarrymore’—(Ha, ha !)—‘but I really shall have to speak to him seriously.’ (Poor Charlie !) ‘It is not right for a man of his position to carry on with a girl if his intentions are not serious.’ (But supposing they are ?) ‘For Kate is a very charming girl ; she is very beautiful, as you know. She has quite won my heart ; and if Charles had not placed his affections elsewhere’—(Since when, pray, auntie ?)—‘I think she would make him an excellent wife.’ (I am sure she *will* ! ) ‘We must take the young man in hand’—(Who must ?)—‘and give him a good talking to. So I want you to come down and help me’—(No, thank you, Lady Ankerwyke)—‘in this as in many other things. The children miss you terribly, and want to see you’—(Poor darlings !)—‘and I don’t know that I can manage them much longer if you do not come.’ (Oh, rebellious are you, Miss Flo and Miss Baby ? Shall your Beryl bring a birch-rod or a box of *bon-bons* ?) ‘Let me have a line to say what train you will come by, and Ray shall be at the station to meet you, and look after your luggage. I shall hope to

see you.' (Poor auntie, I'm afraid you'll be disappointed.)

"Ever your affectionate aunt,

"GILIAN ANKERWYKE.'

"There!" said Beryl, as she screwed up the letter. "Did you ever know such an auntie? The dearest, the best, the kindest, the most far-seeing in the world! And yet she thinks she can stop Charlie Halibourne marrying Kate Clarrymore. And you know what her pet scheme is, Maud. I told you all about it the other day. But Charlie and myself have understood one another long ago, or we should not be the excellent friends we are. I am determined I will not be mixed up with this affair. And what is more, I won't go to Dover at present." And Miss Cheyn stamped her foot, and looked as if she meant what she said.

Beryl wrote at once to Lady Ankerwyke, and urged all sorts of excuses but the real one against her paying a visit to Dover at present. While she was writing there was another ring at the bell, and Beryl changed colour and started, but it turned out to be only a parcel for her aunt.

And where was Master Jack all this time, who started in such hot haste to make his call and his peace? Where? Why, smoking a pipe in the studio of his old friend Heysham, and listening to an especial communication of an entirely confidential nature that the rising artist had to divulge concerning Mignonne Batiste.

## CHAPTER XV.

## "AUNT KATE."

THE sudden advent of Captain Halibourne, alluded to four chapters ago, especially in such company, was a sad blow to Lady Ankerwyke's plans.

The last thing she thought of was that the Clarrymores would be down at Dover. She had heard how their house had been upset by the overflow of a cistern or the bursting of water-pipes, and she was told at the same time that Mrs. Clarrymore and her daughter were going abroad for awhile ; she had been also informed that Mr. John Caversham was to act as their escort. The real fact was that they had said they meant to go South, and somebody told them that Caversham was going to Paris. Kate Clarrymore said how nice it would be if Mr. Caversham would take care of them part of the way. And then somebody stated definitely that they were all going together, and a second somebody shook his head and said it looked rather suspicious, and a third somebody boldly stated that Kate Clarrymore was engaged to Jack Caversham, and a fourth somebody averred that they were already married, and that as there was little money on either side, the young people had gone to the South of France to begin life economically.

Lady Ankerwyke did not believe all these reports. But she fancied the Clarrymores were gone, as she had a long letter from Mrs. Clarrymore, stating her intention of starting as soon as possible, and asking for information with regard to hotels. To this letter she had replied, and she thought by this time that a very serious obstacle to the realization of her scheme was removed. She knew that Charlie would not stay longer at Dullington than was absolutely necessary, and that on receiving her note he would very likely run down to Dover. She had heard several times from Beryl. In all these notes the fact was significantly mentioned that Charlie had not called.

Lady Ankerwyke took heart at this circumstance being so often alluded to, and resolved that Beryl should be sent for at once ; that she would give her a good talking to ; that she would have no more shilly-shallying, and what her ladyship was pleased to call "missish nonsense ;" that it must be pointed out to her that she had been out a couple of years ; that she had been presented, and that she no longer belonged to the nursery crew ; that her days of bread-and-butterhood were long past, and if she did not take care she would have nothing but dry bread without any butter for the rest of her life. Oh yes—Lady Ankerwyke was going to say all this and a great deal more. She was going to be very outspoken, matter-of-fact, and firm, and quite intended to bring matters to a satisfactory conclusion. If any excuse were urged with regard to Flo and Baby, she would at once meet that by sending them to school or engaging for them extra governesses. Lady Ankerwyke was a woman of great power of mind ; she had a wide knowledge of the world, and she had a great amount of shrewd common sense. She

had the rare art of commanding a situation at a glance, and of taking immediate and energetic action.

She was perhaps the only person in the world who could rule Beryl. One morning down at Mossmoore, many years ago, when Beryl was about ten—and her stepmother was a confirmed invalid—Lady Ankerwyke found her niece in one of her terrible tempers. The nurse could do nothing with her, the governess was helpless, and her mama in tears. The aunt saw the position of affairs immediately. When every one seemed afraid of the naughty child, she coolly took her by the hand and led her to her room. There she gave her a good talking to, in a way that she had never been talked to before, and, her ladyship being a somewhat old-fashioned person, improved the occasion in an old-fashioned way. From that time forth—though she had had many a tussle with her aunt since—there was no one who had such influence over her, and whom she respected so much.

Lady Ankerwyke knew this ; but she was also well aware that Beryl was no longer a child, and was certain that if she once put her foot down, there she would make a stand. She fancied that if the young people could have been brought together quietly at Dover, without the disturbing influence of Miss Clarrymore on the one side and Mr. Caversham on the other, things might be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. But all her plans were frustrated by the untimely arrival of two people whom she was especially anxious to keep apart. She was, however, a rare old diplomatist, and took care not to let her nephew see she was either surprised or vexed. She found out that he had never received her note, she affected to take his visit to Dover as a personal compli-

ment and made herself wonderfully pleasant to Kate Clarrymore.

Though Captain Halibourne's advent was not, under such circumstances, particularly agreeable to his aunt, it was hailed with the wildest delight by Flo and Baby. Uncle Charlie was their criterion of everything that was good, bold, brave, handsome, and generous. Halibourne had already promised to marry them both when they were old enough, and Flo and Baby had once quarrelled and slapped one another, in consequence of a dispute as to who should be the future Mrs. Charles Halibourne. They were getting older and beginning to know better, and they both of them felt that such a god as Uncle Charlie would never be within their reach.

They continued their worship, and their enthusiastic admiration for him; but they both agreed that no one was good enough for him. Sometimes they fancied Bee might be worthy of the honour, but they were by no means sure of it. They would like Bee to marry him, because they would be charmed to have him for a brother-in-law. They would not like him to marry out of the family, and they would hate any one else who dared to aspire to wed their hero. All this amused and pleased their aunt not a little. She delighted to hear their remarks on her nephew, their praise of his appearance, his good temper and his bravery, and she by no means discouraged her little girls in their innocent hero-worship.

With all the business he had on hand—his having to keep matters straight with his aunt, to call frequently on the Clarrymores, to write frequent letters to gouty, irritable Sir Charles—he never forgot his old friends, the big babies, and there was scarcely a day passed but what

he took them somewhere and gave them amusement of some description. This circumstance gave infinite trouble to Ray, and made that excellent handmaid's life a burden unto her. One afternoon when they were going out for a walk with their hero, Miss Flo—whom it has already been hinted was something of a coquette—scorned the ordinary serge frock and sailor hat. She vowed it was not half good enough—she would have something else altogether. Having something else, poor Ray knew to her cost, meant an entire change, for Beryl had very severe rules on costume, and Ray was aware they were not to be infringed. She knew if the Dame Trot hats were worn with the mouse-coloured velveteens she would be sure to hear about it.

Lady Ankerwyke smiled when she saw the marvellous transformation that had been effected when the children entered, and was amused at the sudden assumption of snowy embroidered muslins, pink ribbons, and Leghorn hats.

Thus were they seen in at the old-established confectioner's shop in Snargate Street, where Halibourne was treating them to ices and giving them the free run of the counter. It was Mrs. Clarrymore who saw them, and, staring through her double eye-glass, she said to her daughter—

"My dear Kate, what lovely children! What pretty dresses! What—— And there—yes, I cannot be mistaken—is Captain Halibourne!"

"My nieces, Mrs. Clarrymore," said Halibourne, laughing.

"Your nieces? Well, I am delighted! How well you look, my dears! Dover evidently suits you."

"Well, my nieces by courtesy, you know. They are

Miss Cheyn's sisters. This one, Flo, is an invalid—the one who hurt her ankle, you know.”

“Yes, this is dear little Flo, and this is Baby,” said warm-hearted Kate, kissing both the children—“the pretty children I told you about, mama. Flo, you're just like Beryl. Baby, I know you're up to any fun. They're both full of mischief, mama. These are the two naughty children who danced ‘Tarara-boom-de-ay’ in their night-gowns on the landing after everybody thought they were in bed. We're going to be great friends. Will you children come out for a ride?”

Florry's eyes sparkled ; but she told Kate that they had no animals to ride.

“No matter. There are two ponies that belong to my nieces down here. Captain Halibourne can get a mount from his friend Morecamb, and we'll go for a glorious scamper to-morrow morning. What do you say, girls?”

The children were delighted. Not only did they adore riding—they had missed their sturdy sure-footed ponies ever since they left Mossmoore—but they were charmed with Kate's hearty manner, and were not a little delighted at being put on a sort of equality with herself and called “girls.”

It was agreed that, subject to Lady Ankerwyke's approval, they should all start the following day after luncheon. Lady Ankerwyke did not, in her heart of hearts, like this expedition at all, but she was quite certain that she would do more harm than good to her cause by opposing it.

By three o'clock the following day the two little lasses were quite ready and were standing in the balcony on the Marine Parade for their steeds and their escort. They

had the smartest little hats, they had the neatest little habits of dark blue thin cloth, most artfully constructed, tiny white collars, cuffs, and gauntlets, and little sprigs of riding whips. They had everything that a grown-up horsewoman would have except the cloth trousers, and Beryl had put her veto on these as being heavy, cumbersome, and unfeminine. And no doubt she was quite right.

Halibourne and Miss Clarrymore arrived first ; the latter would insist upon dismounting and going in to chat with his aunt. Lady Ankerwyke was charmed with Kate : she was one of those warm-hearted and enthusiastic girls who made friends wherever she went.

"Now, big babies—here are your fiery untamed steeds," said the captain, who was looking out of the window. "It's time to start."

The captain, having put Miss Clarrymore up, soon tossed the children into their saddles ; the groom was told his services would not be required ; and the whole party waved their adieux to Lady Ankerwyke, who came out on the balcony to see them start.

It was a lovely day. They cantered off, down the Marine Parade, across the market-place, and through Biggin Street, intending to go as far as Buckland, and perhaps beyond. The air was positively intoxicating, and the little girls had not ridden for so long that they were actually wild with delight. They laughed and they chattered, the roses bloomed on their bonny cheeks, and they were full of glee. Their merriment was infectious ; Halibourne looked more cheerful than he had done for weeks, and it was impossible to regard handsome Miss Clarrymore without feeling life was glorious. No doubt Captain Charles Halibourne thought so ; but he seemed

to have to look in Kate's face a great many times to assure himself of the fact.

"How do you like the pony, Flo?" said Miss Clarrymore, as they were cantering along together.

"It *is* nice, Miss Clarrymore. I feel just as if I had ridden it all my life. What is its name?"

"Mouse."

"And Baby's ; what is that?"

"That is Mouse also. Yours is 'Town Mouse ;' Baby's is 'Country Mouse.' We have got into the habit of abbreviating the names to 'T.M.' and 'C.M.,' so recollect yours is 'T.M.' They were brought down here for two little nieces of mine, whom we expect shortly. How do you like the saddle?"

"It's very comfortable indeed, Miss Clarrymore."

"I was afraid it might hurt you. It's rather old-fashioned. It was made for me when I was a little girl."

"No, it's all right, thank you, Miss Clarrymore. The inside of the pommel is a little worn, and rubs my leg a little. But it won't matter."

"I will have that seen to ; but my dear child, my sweet Grey Eyes, do not keep on calling me 'Miss Clarrymore,' or you and I will fall out," said Kate, shaking her whip at Flo. "Why not call me Kate? Everybody calls me Kate."

"Does Uncle Charlie call you Kate, Miss Clarrymore?"

"Well, you know, that's different, Flo—quite different," she added, evasively. "I mean all my girl friends."

"But I don't like to, Miss Clarrymore. I'm so much younger——"

"You don't call Uncle Charlie 'Captain Halibourne,'"

"No; that's different, you know. We've known him ever since we can recollect."

"Well, mind, I won't be called Miss Clarrymore any longer. If you must give me a title, why, call me—Aunt Kate."

"Capital!" laughed Flo—"only you don't look old enough. I don't think anybody ought to be an aunt till they're as old as Aunt Ankerwyke."

By this time they were well away from the town, and Halibourne and Baby took the lead and galloped on in front.

"I wonder what mischief those two runaways are after," said Kate, as she and Flo ambled along together. They saw a heavy waggon coming; and in passing it on the wrong side, Baby had to go very close to the fence. The pony started suddenly, and Baby's habit caught in a gate. Had she not had a very good seat she would have been thrown. As it was, the habit had a tremendous wrench. It was slit in the skirt and torn out at the gathers. They laughed a good deal over this; but it was rather a serious matter, and they had to make temporary repairs, and ride slowly on to Charlton. Here the two children descended at a cottage, and a clever old lady undertook to do the necessary mending.

Flo was to wait with Baby, while Halibourne and Miss Clarrymore rode on a little further. They took a considerable time over this ride, for Baby's habit was finished, and they had had a cup of milk a-piece; they had been round the old lady's garden, had fed her chickens, had heard all about her son in China, and her nephew, who was a master carpenter at Berkhamstead, before their friends returned. Flo thought she never saw Captain Halibourne look so happy, and came to the

conclusion that Miss Clarrymore was the most beautiful woman she ever saw.

Riding home, the children noticed that Uncle Charlie was much quieter than usual, and that "Aunt Kate" had none of the fun she had when they started. The two little girls rode on in front, and seemed to know by a rare intuition, common to the smallest of womankind, that their elders would prefer to talk to one another. It was somewhat late when they reached home. Miss Clarrymore did not call at the Marine Parade again, and Halibourne just saw the children safely in, and then escorted her to East Cliff.

Flo and Baby had tea when Lady Ankerwyke was taking dessert, and chattered over the adventures of the afternoon. There was something said about ponies, and Flo remarked—

"Aunt Kate said when she was a little girl——"

"Aunt whom, my love?" said Lady Ankerwyke, majestically.

"Aunt—— I mean Miss Clarrymore, aunt——"

Lady Ankerwyke rose and rang the bell, and the servant appeared.

"Send Ray at once, if you please, for Miss Flo and Miss Baby ; they are tired after their long ride."

And the two children were packed off to bed, thinking what an unjust world it was, and that they would telegraph to their own Bee to come down and see them on the morrow.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### MUSIC AND MISGIVINGS.

“WHAT a heap of letters !” said Beryl, as she and Maud were sitting down to breakfast. “What a nuisance the post is ! How it mars your day altogether !”

“And sometimes makes it,” said Maud.

“Usually the other way, though. I declare I’m often delighted when I find there’s nothing for me.”

“Yes ; but suppose in that heap you found a letter from——”

“I’m not likely to find any letter from any one that will interest me,” replied Beryl, shortly, and bit her lips and blushed ; “unless it is from Flo. I’m afraid aunt and the big babies don’t get on very well together. They’re all right when I’m with them, but I think she doesn’t quite understand them. And both Flo and Baby are difficult to manage sometimes. I shall probably have to run down and set them to rights. Yes, here is one from Flo. Listen. ‘We want so much to see you. We wish you would come down. Aunt sent us to bed the other night at seven.’ And a very good thing too, Miss Flo. ‘We have been out every day with Miss Clarrymore.’ Ho, ho ! ‘She has lent us a pair of the splendidest little ponies in the world. We went for a long ride with

her and Uncle Charlie the other day, and were going again to-day, but he was telegraphed for to Dullington this morning. Sir Charles is not expected to live.' Yes, I shall have to go down, there's no doubt, Maud. Here's another letter for Lady Ankerwyke, and another, and another, and another. Here's a begging letter, I've no doubt, for it is addressed *Lady Anchorwick*. I wonder what her ladyship would say to that?"

"Here's one for 'Miss Feyton,'" she continued, turning over the letters. "I know that handwriting. That's from your lovely little sister Loo. I wonder how many more hearts she has been breaking? I declare that girl has been a coquette from her cradle. I believe she tried her hand at heart-breaking long before she was out of short frocks. If she had had an Aunt Ankerwyke to look after her she would have been kept in order, I'll promise you, my dear Maud. Do you know that I—even I, your fearless Beryl—confess to feeling a *leetle* bit afraid of Lady Ankerwyke, even in the present day? It is odd that she and the children don't always get on well. I know that in my babyhood, when mama was so ill, and aunt was continually at Mossmoore, there was no one that I respected more, and I obeyed her instantly. We frequently had struggles for supremacy, but I must say that Lady Ankerwyke was always the conqueror. What is it, Bunnidge?" she added suddenly, discovering that ancient servitor was waiting at her elbow with a letter on a tray.

"Mrs. Snargate's servant has brought this, and is waiting for an answer, miss."

"Well, I wonder what Mrs. Snargate has to say. Ask him to wait, Bunnidge."

"Now listen, Maud.

“ ‘Cavendish Square,  
“ ‘Ever so early, Friday morning.

“ ‘MY DEAR BERYL,

“ ‘I meant to have called yesterday afternoon to have a chat with you, but was unexpectedly prevented. I promised Lady Ankerwyke to look after you, and so, of course, I haven’t been near you. I want to have the chance of appearing in the character of chaperon this afternoon, so you must come to luncheon at one, *sharp*. I will send the carriage for you at half-past twelve. Bring Miss Feyton with you, if she is still staying with you and cares to come. After luncheon we will all go to St. James’s Hall. It will be an excellent concert. And, my dear Beryl, what do you say to Bach’s Chaconne for the violin, Beethoven’s pianoforte trio in C minor, and his quintet in C major for strings? Eh? I don’t believe you really care about music, you little Goth. But I dare say Miss Feyton does. If she has only half the taste in music that she has in painting (I saw some lovely sketches of hers at Mrs. Chalkley’s the other night) she will pass a most enjoyable afternoon. Don’t fail to come and gladden the heart of

“ ‘Yours most truly,

“ ‘SYLVIA SNARGATE.’

“ ‘The dearest little woman in the world, but mad—absolutely mad—upon music,” said Beryl; “and, if possible, madder still upon lions. It is a good thing that your great lion is not always violently musical. If Doctor W. H. Russell only played upon the ophicleide, if Sir John Millais blew the trombone, or Mr. Irving performed upon the violoncello, Syl Snargate’s delight

would be unbounded. She knows everybody in London who is even a ghost of a celebrity, and her Thursday evenings are sometimes very amusing. Now, I don't care twopence about Bach's Chaconne—but *chacun à son goût*——”

“Beryl, I'm ashamed of you!”

“Ha! ha! Good—very good for me! Nor am I anxious to hear a quintet in C major. I know they will all look so solemn. They will look as if they were Cabinet Ministers, and as if the settlement of the Irish Question depended upon the way they fiddled, and I am sure I shall laugh; but Syl is so amusing that I vote we go.”

Maud was decidedly for going, and so Miss Cheyn wrote word that she would be very glad to accept Mrs. Snargate's invitation.

“I think you'll like Syl immensely, Maud,” said Beryl, as they drove along. “She is a charming edition of Mrs. Leo Hunter. I was at school with her. She is a good deal older than I am; she was what we thought then grown up, and I was what is called now a ‘green peach.’ She was mad about music then. She nearly ran away with the Italian singing-master, and my real belief is that she only married Mr. Snargate because he is one of the best amateur performers on the violoncello in London. They have no children, there is lots of money, and he is at least twenty years older than she is. She goes out a great deal, and I don't wonder at it, for it must be dull work spending an evening at home, with old Snargate droning away on the violoncello——”

“My dear Bee!”

“Well, I didn't mean to be disrespectful. But he is old, and most decidedly dull. You probably won't see

him to-day. He holds some appointment in the Dumble-dore Office, which he attends to when it suits him, and he spends a great deal of his time at the Athenæum Club. I should not like it if I were Syl. But it does not seem to trouble her. With her enormous circle of acquaintances, she has always an escort at command."

They found, as Miss Cheyn had predicted, that Mr. Snargate did not show. There was an amateur tenor, who had to rush off in the middle of luncheon, because he had to sing at a morning concert at Lewisham, and would only just be able to catch his train. Mrs. Snargate and Miss Feyton soon became great friends, and made common cause against Beryl because she sneered at quintets in C major and chaconnes. She was a brilliant, pretty little woman of seven and twenty, with a merry laugh and with an enthusiasm that was perfectly infectious. Even Beryl felt, before she had been there half an hour, that she might get up some excitement over a quintet in C major, and could even tolerate an ancient husband who droned away on the violoncello.

"My dear Bee—Bonny Bee, as we used to call that little teetotum at Miss Demure's," said Mrs. Snargate—"it makes me feel quite old and wrinkled to see you so grown up. I don't believe you're nineteen. As Laura Wingrove you only looked twelve. I believe it's a swindle altogether. The idea of Bonny Bee getting married!"

Beryl laughed and blushed, and Mrs. Snargate noticed it.

"Oh, I don't know anything for a fact, Bee; but I have heard one thing and another. I can put two and two together, just as well as I could at Miss Demure's most select establishment for young ladies when we were taught——"

"Singing by Signor Firenze," suggested Miss Cheyn, quietly.

"S-s-sh! You bad child. Never tell tales out of school! What I was going to say was that I can read clearly now, whereas I could only formerly spell. 'But she made no impression on the artilleree, for the captain with his whiskers took a sly glance at Bee!'" sang the lively little lady.

"Mrs. Snargate, that is not classical music. I am surprised at you!" said Beryl.

"Well, child, I know you cannot appreciate classical music, so you see I sink myself to your level. You ought to have been here last Thursday. We had a very good evening. Lots of talk and not too much of what you would call 'fiddling,' but what people with well regulated minds would call stringed quartets. George Grossmith was here, and gave his humorous lyric about the 'American Girl.' Later, Corney Grain appeared and sang that excellent song called 'Spring's Delights.' Mr. Clarrymore was here, who has just got his house in the hands of the workmen, and appreciated it immensely. I never saw a man laugh so much. Very late indeed Arthur Cecil came in and gave us his sketch of sitting to a photographer. Altogether we had one of the liveliest evenings we had for some time. It's half-past two," she exclaimed, looking at the clock, "and I wouldn't miss that quintet of Beethoven's for any money."

The hall was pretty well crowded when they arrived, but stalls had been secured in the best position. Seated behind them were two oldish young ladies, who seemed to know everybody and the history of most people. They kept on making their remarks to one another in a tone so loud that it was distinctly audible to those

sitting immediately in front of them. They were very caustic and smart, and acidulated drops of their conversation reached Beryl from time to time, and she was mightily amused at the running commentary which these ladies kept up with regard to the audience.

"There's Mrs. Shad-Thames," said one babbler to the other. "I suppose she'll introduce a morning concert in her next novel. She ought to introduce something in her next—there was nothing in her last. Who is Shad-Thames? I never saw him. Did any one ever see him? What position do the husbands of popular novelists occupy? What fun it would be to give a dinner to the husbands of lady novelists! It would be worse, I am thinking, to be the husband of a lady novelist than the husband of an actress——"

At this moment a very distinguished young lady, in a quiet but faultless toilet, took her seat in the stalls. She had such an air about her, and such a sweet smile as she bowed to some friends behind her, that Beryl telegraphed with her eyes to Maud "Who is she?" and Maud flashed in return an ocular message "I don't know;" and both the girls, at the same time, began to ask the question of Mrs. Snargate. Beryl, however, felt quite certain she had seen her somewhere before, but could not think where.

"Yes; and talking about actresses," continued one of the garrulous couple behind them, "there is Mignonne Batiste! And how pretty she is looking, too! How faultless her toilet, and what a charming little hat! Do you know, I think she is looking just a little sad. She is all alone. Where, oh, where is Mr. Caversham? I trust he has not proved faithless——"

Beryl bit her lips and held her breath. Now she knew

it was the girl whose portrait occupied a distinguished position over Jack Caversham's mantelpiece. How clear and distinct came back the memories of that room and those happy days now, and how long ago it seemed since the sunshine of those hours had faded! The two ladies behind them had lowered their voices, and Beryl could only just catch what they were saying. One of them continued—

“Oh, really, I believe there's no doubt about it. Some people say they're married already; but I don't believe that. I fancy his family are strongly opposed to the match. But he ought not to be seen about with her so much if there's nothing in it. Why, I have seen them at a dozen morning performances myself——”

Then came a tremendous round of applause to some music to which poor Bee had not been paying the slightest attention. When it died away, she heard the rill of conversation still trickling on.

“Oh yes, Mr. Curvely, the dramatist, told me that Mr. Caversham always fetched her from the Trifle Theatre every night, and there it was looked upon as a settled thing; in fact, it was he who made her send back the diamond bracelet that old Lord Crackerdoom sent her. I hope everything is all right. She's wonderfully clever, and has been so good to all her people. Poor girl. She certainly looks rather sad, and evidently misses her usual escort to-day.”

Maud Feyton looked round at this moment, and she saw Beryl was as white as a sheet and her eyes half closed. Maud nudged Mrs. Snargate, who was intent on the music, and passed a scent-bottle across to Beryl. Kind-hearted Mrs. Snargate was gently alarmed, and despite the sundry “hushings” on the part of various

mad and irritable musicians who were among the audience, the three quickly filed out.

Beryl revived very much when she got outside. She said it was the heat of the room, and she would rather go home. She insisted upon Mrs. Snargate returning to the concert. Maud went home with Beryl ; and they had just entered at the door, and the carriage had driven away, when Jack Caversham, with his face beaming with smiles, drove up in a hansom cab. He had seen them from the other end of the street. He was going to make a long call, and he felt sure of a favourable reception. He therefore knocked gleefully at the door, which was almost immediately opened. He thought he caught a glimpse of skirts passing up the ancient staircase. He asked if Miss Cheyn was in. Bunnidge informed him that Miss Cheyn was in, but she could not possibly see any one that afternoon. Bunnidge said this with so much seriousness, that Caversham had not a word to say. He left his card, and returned to his hansom and drove away.

When Maud went into the boudoir half an hour afterwards, she found Beryl swinging in her rocking-chair, and sobbing as though her heart would break.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## IN A MINOR KEY.

FLO and Baby were just sitting down to their one o'clock dinner when they heard a fly pull up at the Marine Parade. They saw there was a lot of luggage on the top, they heard the flyman ask if he should ring, and they heard a voice reply that they thought they knew. Flo peered cautiously round the window and saw who it was, and almost shrieked for joy.

"Yes, Baby, it is. It is our own Bee!"

And both the children came dancing out on the balcony, and waving their hands.

"Go in, go in, you two rebels," said Beryl, laughing, and looking better than she had done for the last four and twenty hours.

When she got upstairs, and had recovered from the enthusiastic embraces of the children, she looked round, and said—

"Where's aunt?"

"Why, don't you know, Bee? She went up to London by the twelve o'clock train!"

The fact was, that the aunt and niece had passed on the road, and at about the time Miss Cheyn was driving up to the Marine Parade, Lady Ankerwyke was arriving at Great Ormond Street. Lady Ankerwyke was getting

very uneasy in her mind with regard to Beryl's prolonged sojourn in town, had a fancy to go and see what the new housekeeper was like, and was getting just a little bit bored with Dover, and somewhat worried with the constant charge of her two young nieces. So she resolved she would go and see for herself, which, as she very rightly argued, was far better than writing fifty thousand letters.

Up to Saturday, Beryl had no intention whatever of leaving town for some time. It was true the new housekeeper had arrived, and seemed to be in all respects satisfactory, but Miss Cheyn did not want to be in Dover as long as Captain Halibourne was there, for she felt certain her most wise and diplomatic aunt would do something foolish that would make it disagreeable for all parties. By the last post on Saturday night she had a letter from Charlie at Dullington. In this letter he said that Sir Charles still continued in a most precarious state, that the doctors said he might go off at any time, but still he had such a vigorous constitution that it was possible he might last for months. "At any rate," wrote Halibourne, "I don't see any prospect of my being in town for a month, so I shall be unable to look after you. But people *do* say—— But never mind what people say!"

This letter, combined with the events at the concert at Saint James's Hall, irritated Miss Cheyn not a little, but it showed her the coast was clear at Dover, and to Dover she determined to go. Had it not been for the affair at the concert, she probably would still have remained in town, for she and Maud got on capitally. They had plenty of callers, they had lots of invitations, and they had one or two good-natured chaperons like Mrs.

Snargate, who were always able to find a good escort to the theatres, or any place of evening amusement. Altogether the girls had a prodigiously merry time of it.

Now everything was altered. That unfortunate conversation she heard between two persons she did not know, and had never seen before, at Saint James's Hall, in which Mr. John Caversham's name was coupled with Miss Mignonne Batiste, had made her determined to quit town as soon as possible. She and Maud had talked the matter over on Sunday. Both the girls kept clear of the real grievance in the affair, but each knew well enough what the other was driving at. It must be pretty evident what Beryl's feelings were towards Jack, and Maud liked him very much indeed—as a friend, and nothing more.

But just let two women have a little fault to find with a man, just let them go into committee about the matter and talk it over, and they will make common cause against him, and he will receive but little mercy. Without a tittle of evidence, or an atom of direct information, they will settle to their own satisfaction that he has behaved very badly indeed. If a man wishes really to marry, let him confide in no one else but the girl herself; but how few girls there are who are worthy of such confidence! Once an engagement or a prospective engagement becomes common property, and a number of people form themselves into a limited company to look after it and advise upon it, the chances are that the girl's mind gets poisoned, or the man is misinformed, and everything goes wrong.

The two girls had a very dull Sunday. Maud said she must really be getting home the next day, so on Monday Beryl started for Dover. As luck would have it, the cabman in driving to Victoria Station went through

Hanover Street, and past Jack Caversham's rooms. Beryl could not help glancing up at them, and thought of the happy time she had spent there. It was but a few weeks ago, and yet it appeared to be ages. She seemed to fancy she was quite a different person then.

She looked upon the light-hearted Bee, who used to sit at that window and wait anxiously for the advent of good Doctor Greyfinne, and sometimes, let it be whispered, of some one else, as a totally different person to the sad, almost tearful, Beryl, who was now driving past that very window in a four-wheeled cab. She had half hoped Mr. Caversham might be at the window; and yet, if he had been, she did not see what satisfaction it could possibly afford her. It seems a strange thing to say, but Beryl, at nineteen, felt positively old, and she looked upon Boxing Night at Drury Lane as something that happened a very long time ago. What casual observer as he saw the pretty Miss Cheyn handed into the train, carefully looked after by her maid, and all her belongings so studiously cared for by polite guards and porters—what casual observer would think that girl, with her almost childlike beauty, had begun to speculate on the hollowness of the world, and to fancy that the sunshine had gone from her life?

In Beryl's unsatisfactory state of mind there is nothing like change of air and scene, coupled with some good wholesome occupation, and so doubtless her wisest course was coming to Dover. It was fortunate that Lady Ankerwyke had left, for with her marvellous perception she would have at once found out that something was wrong—would have gradually got the whole particulars from her niece, which would have led to complications which would possibly have been awkward for

everybody. It was no small satisfaction to Beryl to receive a telegram, shortly after her arrival, from her aunt, to say she found so many things requiring her attention in town that she should probably remain there a week. Beryl found Flo and Baby gave her plenty of employment, so she, in a measure, forgot all her own grievances.

"I declare, Flo, you look as well as possible," said Beryl. "Is your foot quite strong? Let's see."

And Flo's shapely leg was put on the sofa and duly pinched and twisted without giving her any pain.

"Oh, that's all right, Flo. There's nothing the matter with you now. As for Baby, she's getting quite fat. It's quite time you two children got to work. What! you've been doing no lessons all this time! I'm ashamed of you. I see it's a good thing I came down. Your aunt has been spoiling you; and so has Miss Clarrymore. You've been doing nothing else all the time you've been here but ride and swim. Can you both swim well now?"

"Oh yes, capitally, Bee."

"Ah, well, I shall come with you to-morrow, and if I find you don't both swim like fishes, you'll get into trouble, I can tell you. Mind, I shall have lessons begun to-morrow morning. I never saw such a pair of idle little girls. If you don't take care I shall have to send you both to a very strict school. It is indeed high time I came to look after you. No more rides, no more luncheons with Miss Clarrymore. Nothing but lots of lessons. Your Beryl will have no more laziness, and if you don't behave yourselves you'll be well whipped."

And the two children laughed, and again kissed their sister rapturously, and went off to prepare for an afternoon drive.

"Well, children, what do you say? Let us go and call on Miss Clarrymore, and take her for a drive?" said Beryl.

"Yes—oh yes!" answered Flo. "Aunt Kate—I mean, Miss Clarrymore—said she *so* wanted to see you directly you came."

Miss Cheyn noticed her sister's title for Miss Clarrymore, and smiled, but made no further remark.

"How is *dear* Mr. Caversham?" asked Flo.

"Pretty well," answered Beryl, "the last time I saw him!"

And all the sunshine seemed to fade out of her countenance, and Flo thought she was going to cry.

They found Miss Clarrymore at home, and delighted to go out driving with them. It amused Beryl very much to see how friendly they had all become, and how they sometimes called her "Miss Clarrymore," and sometimes "Aunt Kate."

"I'm so sick of hearing my hideous name 'Clarrymore' continually reiterated," said Kate, "that I made these children call me 'Aunt Kate.' It's so much less formal, don't you see?"

In the course of the ride the two girls became very confidential, and Beryl was more sure than ever that Kate Clarrymore and none other would become the wife of her old friend, Charlie Halibourne.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## JACK AT A DISCOUNT.

"CAROL, young girl with the chesnut hair, Over the ferry's a world of care!" sang Beryl, when she was splashing in her bath; she continued to sing it to a tune of her own all the time she was dressing. She did not know why, but the words seemed to haunt her. The occasion when she sang so merrily was one morning after she had settled down at Dover for some time, and Lady Ankerwyke had decided not to return, but to enjoy for a brief period a little of the gaiety of the London season. This particular morning Beryl was about rather earlier than usual, for she had promised to take the children to the Admiralty Pier to see the Calais boat start before breakfast.

Her change from London, her quiet life, her hard work, had to a certain extent brought back her peace of mind, and had certainly added an indescribable charm to her beauty. She found she had plenty of employment in getting those little sisters of hers into order again. Flo's accident had disorganized the whole system of training and education. While one sister had been compelled by illness to be idle, the other had taken advantage of the fact to follow her example. Flo, too, was somewhat loth

to relinquish the privileges and advantages of invalidism. She was occasionally petulant and very difficult to manage. It was decided that their governess should not come back till they returned to town, so what with one thing and another Beryl found her hands pretty full, and had little time to sorrow o'er the faithlessness of mankind, and to lament that her "Bayard with a blonde mustache" was anything but *sans peur et sans reproche*. By the way, the title of "Beryl's Bayard" had now by common consent been entirely dropped in conversation, and was only occasionally mentioned by Flo when she was very naughty and wished to be unusually provoking.

On the morning, however, of which we speak she was on her best behaviour. She was as good as gold and as pretty as possible. Indeed, the three sisters made a vastly attractive picture as they walked along the Esplanade that bright sunny morning. Both the children had grown somewhat lately, and seemed to be in the finest health and the wildest spirits as they ran on before Beryl and flew across the asphalté like swallows on a pond, as they fluttered their pretty pink frocks while the sun gleamed on their golden hair and illumined the sheen of sable hose and the flash of snowy frills.

The bright sunshine, the children's laughter, the sound of bugle from the heights, the invigorating breeze, and the gentle plash of the waves against the sea-wall, seemed to put new life into Beryl. She felt brighter and better than she had done since—oh, since the theatricals at Great Ormond Street, which seemed to have taken place so many years ago.

"Carol, young girl with the chesnut hair, Over the ferry's a world of care!" What on earth made her think of those lines, and where had she heard them? Ah! now

she recollected. It was when she was staying in Hanover Street during Florry's illness, and she remembered Jack Caversham reading them one day when he called. They were written, she remembered, by Mortimer Collins, "most musical Mortimer Collins," Jack said. She was calling him Jack, when she had determined yesterday to forget him for ever, and though it was only to herself the thought provoked the prettiest of blushes.

Once more she had doubts ; she might have mistaken the name those two chattering ladies gave at Saint James's Hall, but then again there was the portrait of Miss Batiste hanging in his rooms, and, furthermore, why had he not called? What was the reason of that? Possibly he had found out that she was portionless, and made her behaviour in *A Wonderful Woman* an excuse for retiring altogether. No, she did not think Jack—Jack again!—was a fortune-hunter ; and when she thought if Aunt Ankerwyke had only known how far things had gone at Hanover Street—she absolutely shivered.

"Carol, young girl with the chesnut hair, Over the ferry's a world of care!" How those lines haunted her! As they approach the entrance to the old pier the sea seems to take up the burden, the words insert themselves within the brassy melody being softly brayed by an early German band, they are intertwined in the cry of the seller of prawns, and they accompany the musical clink clank of the distant windlass. Her meditations are interrupted by her two sisters coming wildly racing back to her, with their hair all over their eyes, and their sailor hats well-nigh off, and asking if they may, instead of walking along the cross wall, go over the Ferry. This was always considered a great treat by the youngsters, for they had made great friends with the jovial rugose seaman who rowed

them across. Bee readily gave her consent, and the three merrily tripped down the green, slimy steps, and got aboard the boat.

“Carol, young girl with the chesnut hair, Over the ferry’s a world of care!” It sounded ominous, thought Beryl, but she was not a bit superstitious, and laughed merrily when Baby took a header into the boat, and was only saved from immersion by the stalwart grasp of the ferryman.

Notwithstanding the high spirits and merriment of the whole party, Beryl found it impossible to suppress the burden of the song that haunted her. It was taken up by the brisk little billows as they slumped against the broad-beamed boat, it was repeated in the metrical movement of some coal trucks on the quay, and it was adopted by the ponderous mud dredger, which some merry spirit has christened the Doctor Johnson of shipping. As the red buckets appeared with drowsy regularity, with white jets of water streaming from their scuppers, and that peculiar scroop and clank which appertains to all their sleepy machinery, the song lurked in very slow time amid revolving ponderous chains and gigantic cog-wheels.

When they reached the other side the two children were out in a moment, and the way in which Flo bounded up those steps showed Beryl that Doctor Greyfinne, supplemented by Dover air and swimming in the sea-water, had made a perfect cure, and that the little lass’s legs were as strong as they were shapely, and there was no reason for prolonging their sojourn in Kent.

When they reached the upper terrace of the Admiralty Pier, a bell was going—something in the railway, the steamboat, or the workman’s interest, it does not matter what. It was resonant and musical, but would not echo

the burden of Beryl's song in its entirety. It persisted in saying over and over again, "A world of care, a world of care," and declined to adopt any other version. This she did not like quite as well. Besides, she felt that existence was at the present moment anything but a "world of care." She thoroughly enjoyed the wonderful panorama which you see from this point of vantage.

She noted the old pier and the smoke wreathing up from the valley of the Dour, the graceful sweep of the shore, the houses in Waterloo Crescent, the trees in Granville Gardens, the green balconies of their own dwelling-place in Marine Parade, and the Clarrymores' pleasant mansion in East Cliff, and tiny little Athol Terrace nestling beneath its chalk background. Above all the Castle Hill grandly rising in its variety of verdure and chequering of white, with the Castle itself and Saint Mary's Church as picturesquely placed as if especially designed by some cunning artist. She did not see anything like "a world of care" in this.

Neither did she find it in the colour, the sparkle, the exhilaration with which she was surrounded ; nor in the bright, lively waves dancing in the sunshine, the wondrous and ever-changing variety of light and shade, on sea and sky, on white cliffs, on green sward, and on red shore. What with the sails flashing in the distance, and the glinting gulls lazily flapping over the harbour, and the white-funnelled packet in the foreground awaiting the arrival of the London trains, the scene was such a cheerful one that the young girl with the chesnut hair felt inclined to carol with no misgivings with regard to a world of care.

It was somewhat early yet. Neither the South Eastern nor the Chatham and Dover trains had arrived. There were, however, a good many passengers on board, and

stragglers accompanied by porters and barrows were coming down from the Lord Warden and the Dover Castle hotels. The three sisters were walking up and down, and Florry was chattering about a very pretty girl they had noticed going about Dover with a stout—what Flo called a “hoosetty”—old lady, whom they fancied might be her aunt. Beryl was very much interested in the description and laughing a great deal over it. Presently they stopped in their walk, and Flo said suddenly—

“Why, look, Bee ; why, *there* she is ! Isn’t she pretty ?”

Bee looked and, standing on the top of the steps leading to the steamer, to her intense astonishment beheld Miss Batiste, looking better than her picture in Caversham’s rooms and infinitely more lovely than she appeared at the concert at St. James’s Hall. She had on the most coquettish soft felt hat, and wore the neatest and most becoming of travelling dresses. She was evidently going by the steamer, and she had a large quantity of luggage. The queer old lady the children had spoken of was not with her, but there was no doubt she was waiting for somebody. She seemed anxious, and was continually consulting her watch.

“Yes, dear,” answered Bee, “she is lovely !”

“The old lady’s late, and she’s getting in a fever !” said Baby.

At this moment Ray came up and took the children for a turn along the pier.

Beryl was absolutely fascinated, and could not take her eyes off the girl who was evidently getting anxious and was tapping impatiently with her umbrella.

Presently, Bee, who could not help feeling an inward satisfaction that the graceful damsel was quitting England, saw her face brighten. It became absolutely

radiant, her eyes sparkled, and she was nodding enthusiastically to some one in the distance. Several luggage trucks were in the way, and it was impossible to see who was coming.

"Better late than never! Here's Flo's friend the hoosetty old lady at last," said Bee to herself.

The luggage trucks were suddenly rattled on one side, and she saw, not a stout old lady, strange, weird, and embarrassed with cloaks, umbrellas, and hand-packages, but a very good looking young man, who seemed to be mightily contented with himself and the world in general. That young man had a blonde mustache, and that young man's name was Jack Caversham. Jack Caversham with a very merry face and looking better than ever. He had on a drab felt hat and a grey tweed suit; he was leisurely smoking a big cigar; he was followed by a porter carrying a large portmanteau and a bundle of coats.

Miss Batiste took his right hand in both of hers and appeared delighted to see him. And, truth to tell, he seemed in no wise displeased to see her. They were chattering in English and in French, and Bee, in the midst of all her annoyance, could not help being struck by the purity of Jack's accent. His merry laugh might be heard as he stood with his back to the upper terrace and pointed across the harbour and chatted to his companion. At last the Chatham and Dover train was signalled, and the pair descended the steps. The train came up and partially obscured the view of the steamer.

The bell clanged and seemed to re-echo, "A world of care," with knell-like distinctness. Bee was glad enough that the children had been away all this time, and when they returned and said they were desperately hungry

she sent them home with Ray, saying she would follow presently.

She waited there till the South Eastern train came in and the bell once more took up the burden of "A world of care." She waited till the mails were all in, the hawsers unhitched, and the steamer had started. She was the last to remain leaning over the rail ; and if Jack Caversham had not been so abominably short-sighted he would have been pained by the sweet sorrowful look, which gave a touching sadness to her childlike beauty.

She had taken her opera-glass and was gazing steadily at the receding boat. She saw Jack and his friend had selected a comfortable place well shielded from the wind, she saw him place a stool for her feet, and arrange her shawls : she observed that they were in animated conversation as if they were the best friends in the world. Long after the steamer was well on its way did she continue to gaze. The last thing she saw was Jack enveloping his companion in one of his thick coats.

And then things began to be indistinct ; possibly there was something wrong with the lenses ; perchance gazing so long in the sunshine made the eyes water. At any rate, a spotted blue pocket-handkerchief—which she remembered had been admired by Jack—was raised to her face pretty frequently as she took her way sadly and slowly down the pier.

As she passed along the quay some shipwrights were hammering her song into a brig. "Carol, young girl with the chesnut hair, Over the ferry's a world of care !" They did it not pleasantly or tunefully. But they did it in an angry, vindictive, and *staccato* manner, as if they were knocking nails into a coffin.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## AN APOLOGY FOR JACK.

IT is to be feared, in the estimation of those who are good enough to peruse this story, that Jack Caversham is no longer a hero.

If he has been fortunate enough to have been placed on a pedestal and won the sympathy of some of the readers at the commencement of this narrative, by this time he has been hurled from his elevation and treated without a grain of consideration. They probably regard him in the same light that Beryl did, and say there is no excuse for his abominable conduct. How easy and delightful it is to condemn a man unheard, and how inexpressibly delicious it is to hear one side of the question and absolutely refuse to listen to the other! It is by no means certain that blind and obstinate partisanship is not the very essence of true friendship.

How cold, how calculating, how disgustingly business-like does the judicial mind appear when friendship is concerned, and how irritating are those persons who weigh evidence, who calculate the relative value of pro and con, and who make allowances! Beryl's two great friends, clear-headed Maud Feyton and warm-hearted Kate Clarrymore, would not have heard a word in favour

of Jack, and would probably have refused to hear his name mentioned.

The hero of our little drama cannot, however, be quite extinguished yet. It is necessary that he should play his part until the fall of the curtain ; therefore one may hope some among the readers of this little history are possessed of judicial minds, and are not altogether such slashing critics as Maud and Kate. Jack's friendship for Harry Heysham, and his solicitude with regard to his affairs, had already operated somewhat adversely to Jack's interest.

When the latter, through his own jealousy and folly, had abstained from calling for so long at Great Ormond Street, and when, after meeting Miss Feyton, he meant to call that very afternoon, an urgent letter from Heysham caused him to postpone the opportunity. Shortly afterwards he called, just after the mishap at Saint James's Hall, and was informed, as we know, that Miss Cheyn could not be seen. He was told the same thing on subsequent occasions ; then he heard that she was out of town ; finally, the report concerning Hali-bourne grew and magnified, and he gave the whole thing up, and then he——

"Of course he did. We knew exactly what he would do," shout a thousand female voices ; "he ran away with Me Batiste—the little designing minx with her Titian-tinted hair, who ought to be well whipped——" Patience, dear, kind, gentle, charitable ladies, before you proceed with the chastisement of this admirable little lass, and before you take away the character of two exemplary persons ! Pray rest assured that Jack Caversham's relations with Me Batiste were of the most honourable description. He never ran away with her at all. Now, perhaps, you are disappointed ! It must be

admitted that the case, as viewed from the Admiralty Pier, did not look favourable for either of the parties concerned. But everything was fair and square and aboveboard, and Jack's appearance in a somewhat equivocal position was simply in consequence of going out of his way to oblige his old friend.

Heysham had been hopelessly in love with Mignonne since we first knew them; they had been engaged just after the theatricals at Lady Ankerwyke's—it was not known to everybody how useful Miss Batiste had been in making some of the performers perfect in their parts—and it was decided they should be married when the run of *Prince Pâtissier* came to an end. Every one knows, who takes an interest in theatrical affairs, that on account of previous arrangements the piece was withdrawn in the heyday of its success, and therefore the marriage took place rather earlier than was at first intended. The wedding, it was arranged, was to be celebrated at St. Omer, where Me's aunt lived, who was her only relative, who was fairly well off, and very fond of her clever niece.

Jack was very naturally "best man" on the occasion, and it was arranged that Heysham, Caversham, and Miss Batiste were to go over in company about a week before the wedding. This seemed to suit all parties well enough, but at the very last moment Heysham was detained in town by business, and, as Me's aunt was expecting her, he begged his old friend to take charge of her. Jack safely delivered her into the hands of her aunt, he returned to Calais, and again found himself at St. Omer on the wedding-day.

Having given the young couple his blessing, and having seen them off on their honeymoon, he bethought him that he required a little change himself, and he

would take a trip on his own account. All the excitement of Heysham's wedding being over, he began to feel very downhearted. He was in no humour to return to town, and did not feel that he could at present see Beryl again, or that he could put any heart into his congratulations of Halibourne. Things appeared to be at a deadlock ; there seemed to be a sluggishness in his life and a want of animation in his affairs that a little change of air and scene might rectify.

Some people hold the theory, that if you go away for change, your absence, by some mysterious law, affects your entire circle. If you remain at home nothing happens, but everything goes on with a jog-trot regularity. But directly your back is turned, Brown seizes the opportunity of getting married, Jones suddenly becomes bankrupt, Robinson appears in the Divorce Court, or Smith commits suicide. There was something of this feeling pervading the mind of Caversham when he determined to absent himself for a time from London.

He made a little tour through the more secluded parts of France. He had been reading that delightful volume, "A Cruise upon Wheels," by Charles Allston Collins ; and being at St. Omer, he thought he would travel somewhat in the wheel-tracks of the excellent Mr. Fudge and Mr. Pinchbold. He drove whenever he could, sometimes he walked, occasionally got the assistance of the railway, and in the course of his trip visited St. Hilaire, Doullens, Chailly, Fontainebleau, Sens, Joigny, Chablis, and Tonnerre, among other places.

At the Lion d'Or at the last-named town he came upon some English papers ; and as he had not seen any for a fortnight, he perused them with considerable

pleasure. He found a notice of the Royal Academy, which spoke in high praise of a little picture by Mr. H. Heysham as one of extraordinary beauty and sweetness, and the reader smiled when he recognized it as the one the artist was painting of Me last March. He also saw that the hot weather was having its effect upon the theatres, and among others that announced approximate closing was *The Trifle*.

Then he saw an announcement that startled him considerably:—"We regret to announce the death of Sir Charles Halibourne, Bart., who died after a long illness at Dullington Park. The deceased baronet at one time represented the county, etc., etc. He was greatly esteemed for, etc., etc. It is understood that the main portion of his property is inherited by Captain Charles Halibourne of the Grenadier Guards, etc., etc."

He then read in another paper: "We understand the engagement between the present Sir Charles Halibourne and a lady well known in society, which has been rumoured for some months past, will shortly be announced." And that suddenly reminded him he had entirely forgotten about sending the announcement of Heysham's wedding to the *Times*. He went round to the telegraph-office at once, and wired it, with a request for its insertion, to a friend in London. Having done this, he came to the conclusion he would return to England at once. He did not exactly know why, but probably it was because he felt his chance was altogether at an end, and he knew the worst of it.

It seemed, though he could scarcely tell the reason, to give him a feverish anxiety to return. He had had enough of slow-crawling conveyances, walking, and

secluded towns and neglected country lanes : he once more seemed to pant for the noise, the bustle, and the life of London. Thus it came to pass that he set his face Londonwards by a series of the swiftest trains that he could discover.

## CHAPTER XX.

## DISCORD AND HARMONY.

AFTER all, Beryl was rather sorry to leave Dover ; for, despite her sorrow and her disappointment, she had altogether had a very pleasant time. But she was bound to go ; she had scarcely, as yet, had a glimpse of the London season, and, moreover, she and her aunt had been invited by the popular Mr. Rudolph, of the War Office, to his delightful rooms in Saint James's Street, to see the Royal Wedding Procession pass, on the 6th of July, and that day was now close at hand.

She had greatly enjoyed her quiet days with the children, and the occupation they gave her in superintending their lessons and amusements kept her from dwelling too much on herself. She was very brave, was Beryl. No one would think, from her cheerful aspect, the heartiness with which she entered into the children's games, and the sympathy she had with all their joys and troubles, how much she suffered when she was alone. She talked but little of her affairs, even to her dearest friends, therefore there were probably none, save Jack and herself, who knew how deep the affection had been between them. And these two did not know how serious their feelings towards one another were till it was altogether too late.

Among other pleasant phases of the visit to Dover was the ripening of her friendship with Kate Clarrymore. This warm-hearted girl confided much in Beryl, although, perhaps, she did not receive much confidence in return. Beryl had also received several confidential letters from her old friend and playmate Charlie Halibourne; she was well assured that everything was practically settled between him and Kate, and before the Clarrymores' departure Beryl ventured to congratulate her friend in a sort of informal fashion, and she felt, no doubt, that the recent death of Sir Charles Halibourne would before long lead to a definite announcement of the engagement. She felt somewhat lonely after Kate's departure, and during the last few days missed the bright companionship of Flo and Baby, whom she had packed off along with Ray and a greater part of the luggage, remaining only to pay some bills and get everything cleared up.

The weather, which, on account of a few showers, every one said was going to break up, had once more become glorious, and the whole place wore that inviting aspect which most maritime resorts invariably wear at the very moment you are compelled to quit them. Everybody seemed to be idler than usual, everybody seemed to be enjoying themselves more than ever, and everybody stared with commiseration—so Beryl thought—at her luggage-laden fly being driven towards the South Eastern station.

She felt quite angry with people who were pursuing their ordinary avocation and amusements, while she was being rapidly wafted away towards hot, stuffy, noisy London, and she felt it a personal grievance that the band, which she had so frequently encouraged, as it gave such delight to Baby and Flo, should be playing "Oh,

Mr. Porter, what shall I do?" and "Daddy wouldn't buy me a bow-wow," with more spirit than usual on the occasion of her departure. A glimpse of the Admiralty Pier in the distance reminded her of that sad morning there, and made her somewhat sorrowful as she reached the station in plenty of time for the Two forty-five.

It happened to be a boat-train, but the steamer was unusually early, so there was longer than the ordinary pause at the town station. Though Miss Cheyn was travelling alone, she had no lack of attention. The station-master selected her carriage; the porters vied with one another in their politeness; the ticket examiner was most courteous; and the guard, who found there was nothing left for him to do, looked in at the window, touched his cap, and seemed to breathe a sort of railway benediction on the whole undertaking that was absolutely refreshing. Beryl made a very pretty picture as she sat in the further corner of the carriage, with her wraps, her travelling bag, her packages—for, after all, there were a whole lot of things that Flo and Baby had left behind—her books, baskets, and newspapers.

There were but very few in the train, so Beryl had the whole compartment to herself, and but little chance of any intruder. While waiting she took up "*A Mere Child*," by Mrs. Walford, she had just bought, and found it to be a story of extraordinary interest. She was so absorbed in it that she quite forgot about the train, and it was like waking up from a pleasant dream when she heard a shrill whistle followed by a bass whistle, then a jerk of the carriage, and she found the train had started.

At the same moment she heard a shout of voices, "Too late, sir!" "Can't do it, sir!" "Jump in quick, sir!" and she found the door of her carriage quickly opened,

and a young man violently pushed in by porters. In his haste he sat down on some of Beryl's parcels that were strewn all over the seat.

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure," said he, raising his hat, as he got up and moved the parcels. "I was so nearly too late and in such a hurry that——"

"Jack!" said Beryl.

"Beryl!" said Jack.

"This is quite an unexpected pl—circumstance, Mr. Caversham," said Beryl, with a tiny tremble in her voice, and recovering her self-possession in a moment.

"I really am most fortunate, Miss Cheyn, but I trust I am not intruding," answered Jack, somewhat awkwardly, and not knowing exactly what to say next. "I did not mean to get in, you see; but I was pushed into the first carriage. Of course I can change if——"

"I believe this train stops at Folkestone," rejoined Beryl, coldly.

At that moment the train ran into darkness beneath Shakespeare Cliff and the most clattersome of tunnels. Conversation was hopeless, but there was plenty of time for reflection.

He thought he had never seen her looking so lovely before. He detected a certain reserve, which he put down to his not calling at the right time, also to the dignity that must belong to the future Lady Halibourne. And yet the sweet look that came into her eyes, and the pleased surprise with which she said "Jack!" had not escaped his observation. It immediately recalled some of those bright afternoons in Hanover Street never to return.

She could not help thinking to herself how well he was looking—indeed, his trip had bronzed him and immensely improved his personal appearance—and yet she

was provoked with herself for allowing it. She could not help having a sort of liking for him one moment, though she thoroughly despised him the next. "Why is not his wife here?" she asked herself. "What has he done with her? Sick and tired of her by this time, no doubt! Dare say he's run away from her! He's quite capable of doing that, or of breaking her heart, or breaking her head, or killing her, or any other villainy!" And she tapped impatiently with her foot on the floor of the carriage.

By this time the train shot out of the tunnel into the sunshine, and Beryl found Jack was looking straight at her, and Jack found Beryl had her eyes fixed on him. They both took up newspapers, and feigned to be deeply interested in their contents.

Jack, however, furtively peeped over the top of his paper, and could not fail to observe every detail of the pretty picture in the further corner. He noted the artfully crushed hat with its intertwisted ribbons of faint rose and ruby, repeating the tones of the maiden's cheek and lips. He was cognizant of provoking dimples, of downcast eyes "dark-lashed, delicious, luminous, and sweet." He was not unmindful of the exquisitely fitting frock of unbleached cambric, the Malmaison carnation in her bosom, the dazzling little white collar and cuffs, the hint of snowy petticoat, the glimpses of gleaming Oxford shoes and silken sable hose, the Suède gloves, and the dainty dust-cloak; all deriving value from the cool celadon tint of the *Graphic* which the damsel held before her.

Of course Beryl did not for a moment attempt to peep over the top of *her* paper. Such an idea might have occurred to her, and she might have been raising her eyes with the intention of carrying such a notion into execu-

tion, when the train plunged once more into darkness and discord through the Abbot's Cliff tunnel.

The eclipse, however, did not last long, and by the time they had got well into the open air again they were approaching Folkestone. Jack rose and went over to Beryl's side of the carriage. She drew back her petticoats haughtily, so that they should not even touch him.

"I shall be able to change here, I hope."

"I hope so, I'm sure," answered Beryl. The train, however, did not slacken, but shot through the station. "Altogether hopeless," she added, opening her newspaper wide, as she saw Caversham had taken the seat opposite to her.

Jack began to think it was about time to try and make himself agreeable. As he imagined Miss Cheyn to be engaged, he could not understand why she kept up this tone of pique.

"I trust Sir Charles Halibourne is well," said he.

"*What!* Haven't you heard of his decease?—"

"Yes, certainly; but I mean the new baronet, your old friend——"

"Oh, thank you, I believe he's well; but I haven't seen him for a month. He's so busy, you know——"

"What a very odd thing!" thought Caversham. "I wonder why he is not looking after his *fiancée*."

"I trust," said Beryl, with some hesitation, "that Mrs. Caversham is well."

"I believe she's very well, thank you," said Jack; "but I have not seen her lately." "Wonder why she is inquiring after my mother?" thought he. "They haven't met since Bee was a baby."

"Just what I fancied," thought Beryl; "he *is* neglecting that poor girl."

Then there was a long silence once more as the train went whirling on. He took up the *Morning Post*, and she took up the *Times*. They affected to be vastly interested in the contents, but they really used them as screens to prevent being looked at.

Jack found himself reading paragraphs over and over again, not taking the least interest in them, and not even understanding what they meant. At last he read one that made him jump; he rubbed his eyes, he read it over twice, before he could thoroughly take it in and absolutely believe it. He held the paper tight, he steadied himself against the side of the carriage, and he read: "A marriage is arranged between Sir Charles Halibourne, Bart., who has recently succeeded to his uncle's title and estates, and Miss Clarrymore, only child of Clamer Clarrymore, Esq., M.P. for Bullock Smithy."

"*What!*" he shouted. "Is this true? Beryl, tell me if it is true?" And he read the paragraph again.

"Perfectly true, Mr. Caversham, and I don't see why it shouldn't be," she answered from behind her newspaper; "they've been as good as engaged for the last six months. I don't see any cause for excitement; and I think you're forgetting yourself in using my Christian name."

"I beg pardon, I'm sure," answered Jack, most humbly, "but I was surprised because I had understood for a very long while past that he was engaged to somebody else. Everybody said——"

"If you pay any attention to what everybody says you will always be wrong," she continued, still speaking behind her paper. "I always make it a rule——"

And then she stopped suddenly. She had been carelessly running her eye over the births, deaths, and marriages column, and had seen something in the latter

department that made her bite her lips and shut her eyes. She opened them wide and read : "Heysham—Batiste.—On June 7, at St. Omer, Pas-de-Calais, at the church of St. Denis, Henry Heysham, of London, to Mignonne, only child of the late Geoffry Batiste."

And then it suddenly struck her how similar in sound were the names "Heysham" and "Caversham," and how easily one might be mistaken for the other, if not very distinctly pronounced. The voices of those chattering ladies at Saint James's Hall, and the whole scene of that eventful afternoon, returned to her with photographic minuteness.

She felt out of breath and her heart began to beat quickly : she gazed from the window, and the lovely landscape through which they were whirling seemed blurred and indistinct.

First she was hot, then cold. Now she felt faint, and anon came a sudden thrill which gave a sweet earnestness to a trembling voice that commanded the instant attention of her fellow-traveller.

"Jack!—Mr. Caversham, I mean," she said, putting the paper down and gazing straight at him with an expression in those lovely blue-grey eyes that he had never seen before. "Listen." And she read the paragraph through again. "Is this true?"

"True? Of course it is. They're on their honeymoon now. I ought to know; I was best man. Went over with them some weeks ago. Heysham couldn't start at the right time, so I had to take charge of Miss Batiste, and a most serious responsibility it was——"

"Jack!" said Beryl.

"Beryl!" said Jack.

And then the train went into a tunnel!

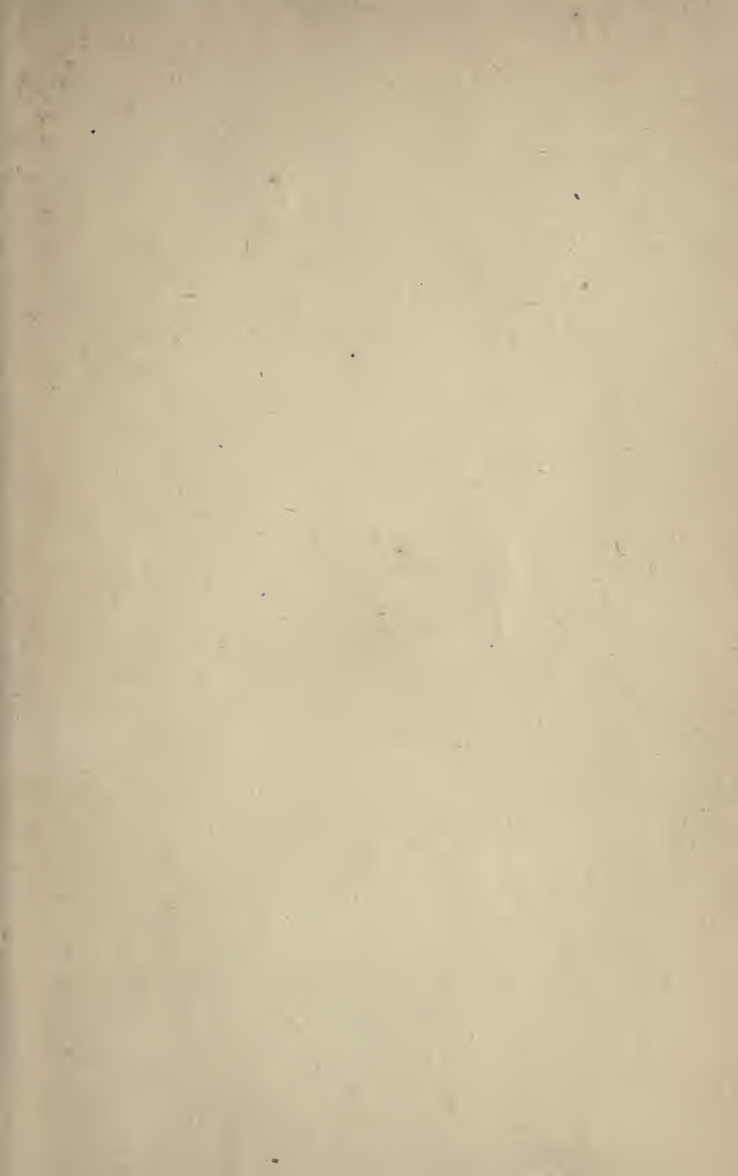
It was a long tunnel, but it seemed to these young people to be the very shortest ever known.

When the train came out again Jack was not sitting opposite to Beryl.

When the train emerged into the bright pure air, the whole country seemed surpassingly beautiful, and life supremely delightful.

The sun was shining gloriously, and the sun shone on naught but hope and happiness !

THE END.



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